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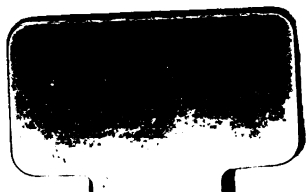


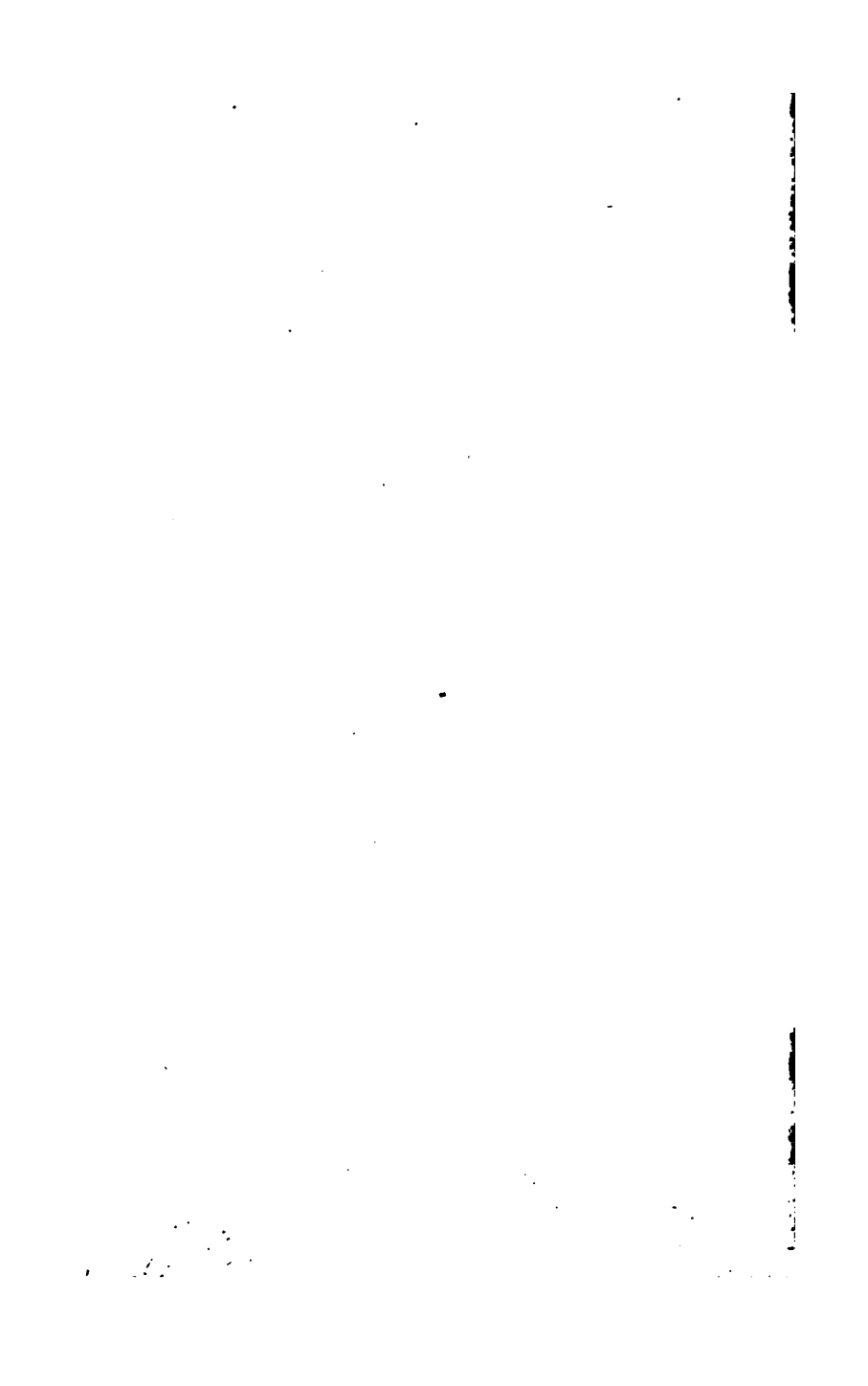




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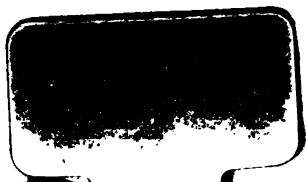






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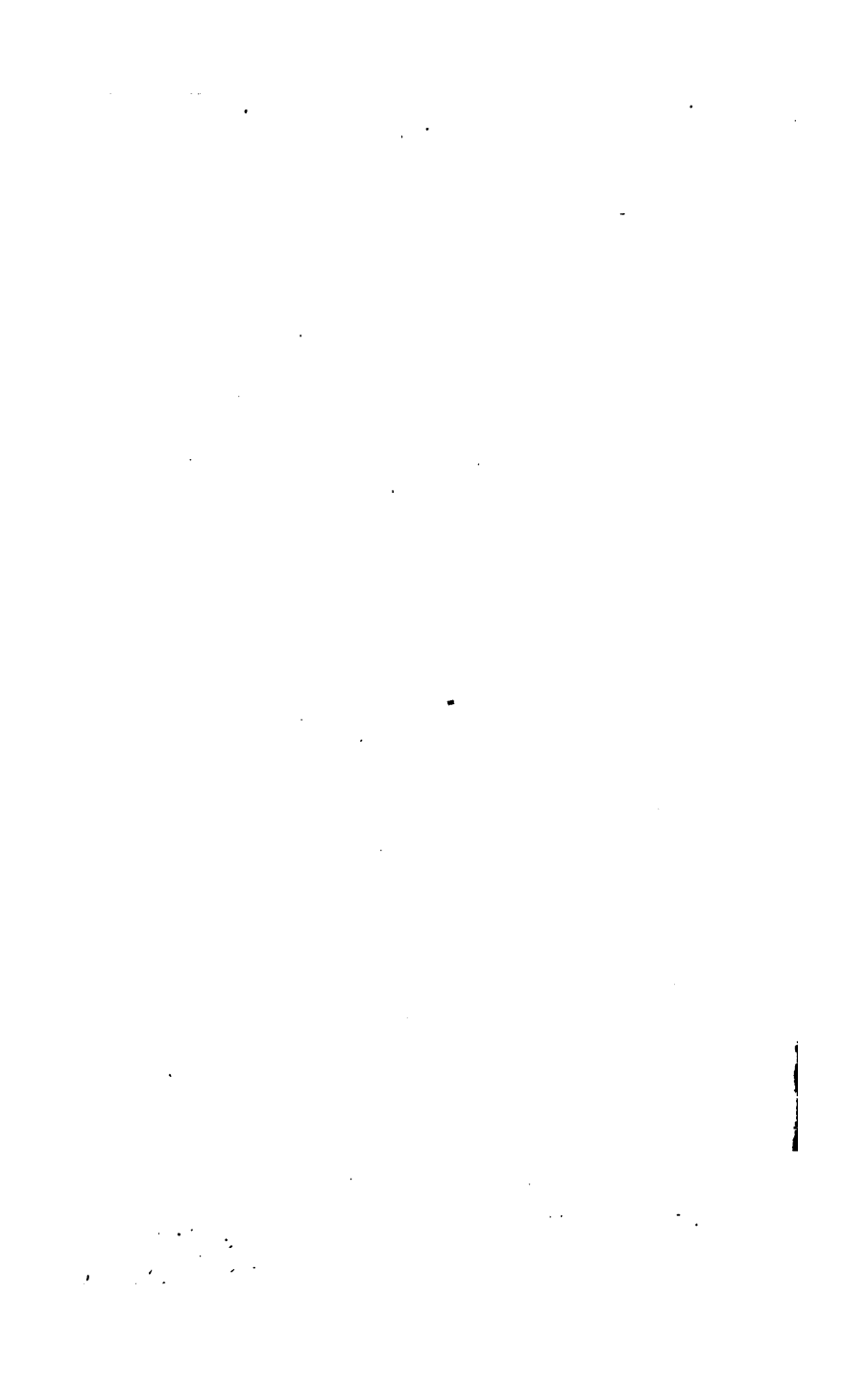


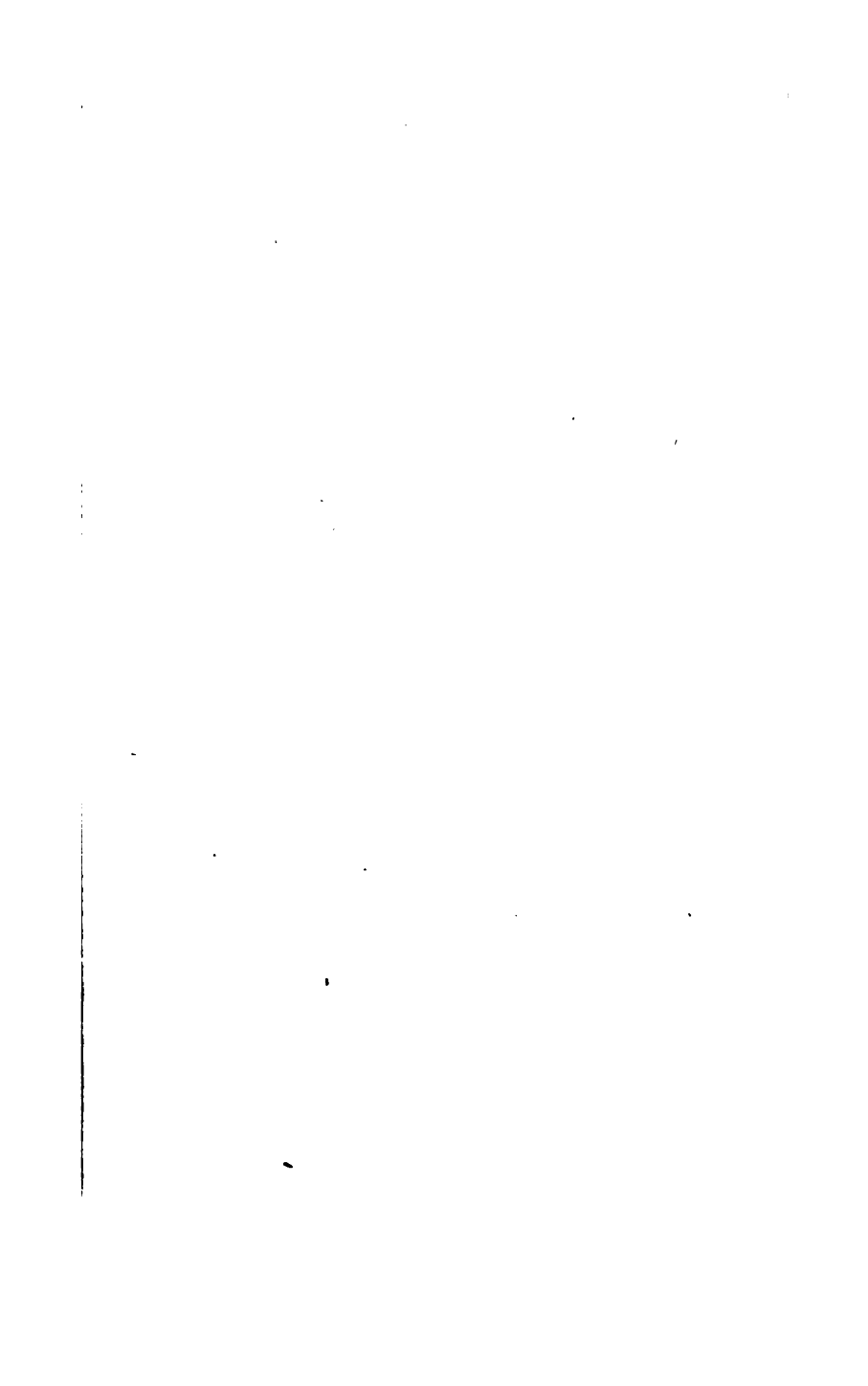


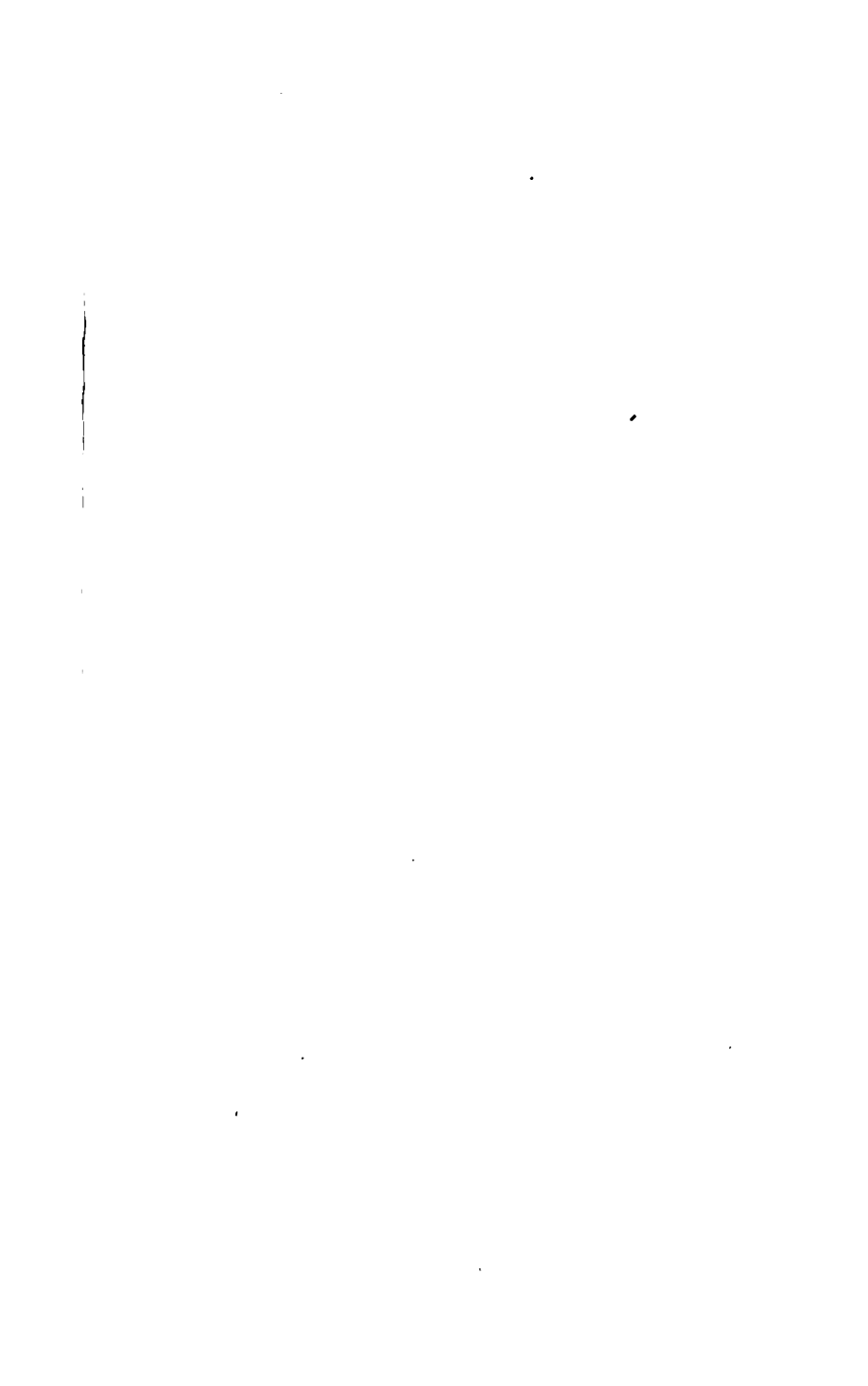
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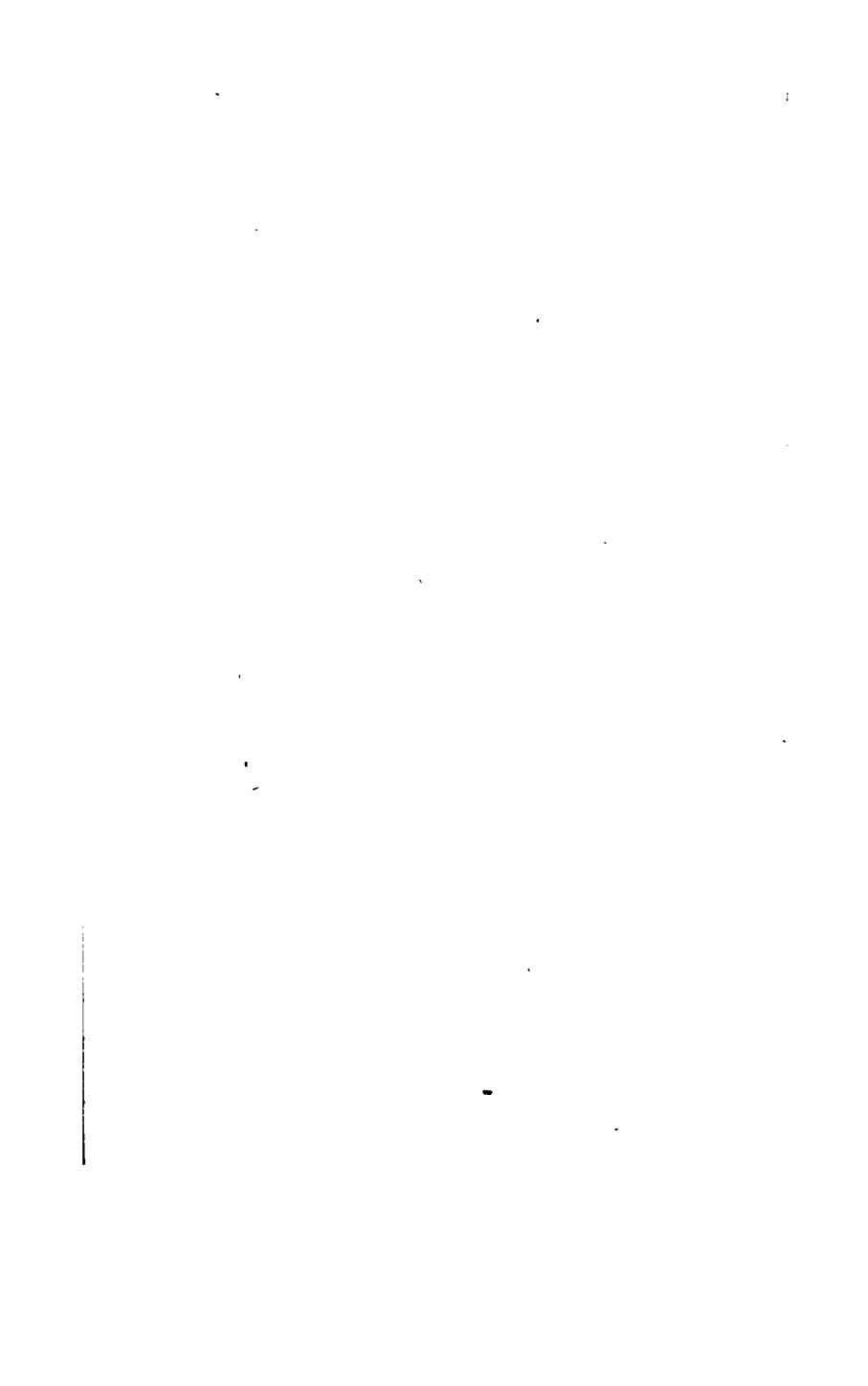












**PETRARCH**  
**AND**  
**LAURA.**  
**BY MADAME DE GENLIS.**

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*TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.*

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".....ben convengono ambedui ;  
Ch'egli è di lei ben degno, ella di lui."

*Tasso.*

" True glory is the prize of virtue."

*Petrarch.*

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**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

**VOL. I.**

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**1820.**



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## DEDICATION

TO

HELEN, COUNTESS DE CHOISEUL,

FORMERLY

PRINCESS DE BAUFFREMONT.

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My dear friend,

The constant attachment, of which you have given me so many affecting proofs, ever since your infancy, has so grown beneath my eyes, along with yourself, that it has ended by making me insensibly forget the disparity of our years. The liveliness of my own feelings, and the perpetual charm that our conversations have for me, lead me to imagine myself as young as you are. It is one of those illusions of the heart which we can carry with us to the grave, and which console us for the loss of every other.

You are fond of the subject, and of the hero of this work. Who can appreciate better than yourself a lofty and susceptible soul,

united to the finest poetic talent! I have never profaned my dedications; throughout my works they have never been dictated by vanity or ambition. You may believe then, my dear friend, that, at the time of life at which I am arrived, the homage which I offer is sincere. I feel that I am presenting you with my last thoughts, and this melancholy idea is not without sweetness to me. You will often read this work, and always with affection; you will retrace in it my thoughts, my opinions, my sentiments, my entire soul; in short, all that has attached us, by sympathy, to each other. A portrait, a resemblance of mere features, is only a weak and fugitive remembrance: so short a time may rob it of its likeness; but the soul neither sleeps nor dies; and in that absence, the name of which makes us start, all that it possesses of goodness, generosity, and tenderness, not only remains, but must become purified and exalted: for such a soul to pourtray itself in its productions, is for it to leave to friendship the only remembrance which can never fail: it is thus that we are enabled to live always with those we love. In the moment, then, of our inevitable sepa-

ration, listen to that interior voice which will repeat to you the three words so full of consolation, which terminate this work. In the mean time let us enjoy all the pleasures of an intimate confidence, and a reciprocal communication of ideas. In consecrating ourselves to useful employments, the arts and friendship, we prune life of its idleness and vanities; in spite of fate we embellish our existence, and we prolong it likewise, if we lose none of the pure enjoyments of the heart and mind which it is capable of affording. You will see in this history that our destiny has nothing of the material world connected with it; that it depends, in fact, entirely upon our taste, our imagination, our character, and our habitual occupations. This power of untwisting the darkest combinations of fortune, and of depriving chance of its depressing influence, is the most precious gift that the Creator has bestowed upon human nature. In nothing can the brute creation oppose their fate—man can rise superior to his in every thing; he can soften his situation by the sublimest hopes; he can transform it into any thing he pleases, by the most delightful illusions. There is a

sovereignty, nay a magic, in his will !\* But these wonderful faculties only produce happiness to him, when they are united with virtue, and a profound sentiment of duty. An ardent mind, and a depraved heart, can only engender monsters of folly and guilt. These reflections are not misplaced in the dedication of the history of Petrarch ; for we may easily discover from his letters, and in his poetry, that he owed the sweetest moments of his existence to the illusions of his imagination, and the ideal scenes which it raised around him.

We have often remarked, when we have been conversing together on the subject of this work, that there would be a great difficulty in representing Petrarch equally enamoured of the fine arts, glory, and Laura. It should seem that the love of glory, inse-

\* This power of imagination which can invest reveries with all the importance of reality, is not more surprising than the effects which theatrical representations, and even the perusal of a book, occasionally produce. Why should not our own inventions of the same kind, adapted to our own immediate sentiments, make us experience emotions as lively as those which are excited in us by fictions foreign to our own particular situation and feelings?

parable from poetical enthusiasm, ought to render every other passion only a secondary consideration. But the attentive study of Petrarch in his writings, his history, his character, and the motives of his actions, has convinced me that he had so much elevation of mind, such purity of ideas, and such profound sensibility, that, notwithstanding the vivacity of his feelings, his enthusiasm was the genuine offspring of his soul: he adored Laura because she was, in his eyes, the most perfect of women; he advocated the cause of liberty, not to make himself popular as its defender, but solely through philanthropy, heightened by his seducing recollections of ancient Rome. His friendships were always founded upon admiration; he gave himself up with enthusiasm to the study of poetry, as the language most capable of expressing the nobleness, the energy, the exaltation of his thoughts and sentiments. He loved glory because he looked upon it as the reward of virtue, and the only one on earth that was worthy of her. His tastes and inclinations never sprung from pride or vanity; his passions all flowing from the same principle, neither struggled with,



nor yielded to, each other—none reigned exclusively: on the contrary, their strength and constancy consisted in their general agreement. Above all, he was eminently religious; as must always be the case with a character like his. The grovelling thoughts of infidelity would have been repugnant to every feeling of such a noble disposition, and of a mind capable of receiving every thing, and comprehending every thing, except the idea of annihilation; and if even the sublimity of evangelical morality could have failed to convince his reason, it must inevitably have persuaded his heart. There is an infinity in moral perfection, which is only an excellency without limits; all souls of susceptibility, united to a strong imagination, will direct themselves towards it, by a natural effort; and if the passions divert them from it, they will return to it with increased ardour: as a vigorous tree, bowed down by an oppressive power, at length disengages itself from the force which oppressed and overcame it, and springs up again with proud impetuosity. Vice, in conjunction with impiety, acts only under momentary sensations and impulses: it is surrounded by

frightful boundaries, which are to it so many abysses: it repulses the memory of the past; it consumes, it devours the present; and, tremblingly, throws a dark veil over the future. So far from wishing to cherish the sacred fire of the imagination, it delights in trampling it on the earth, and substituting in its place monstrous and disgusting visions. Circumscribed in the narrow and contemptible circle of its physical necessities and pleasures, we may compare it to the vile insect which crawls, vegetates, and fixes itself upon a barren rock, in the midst of dangerous sands, and surrounded by the deep whirlpools of a raging sea.

One of those men of genius who best know the human heart, has said, that in the conduct and actions of life, "order leads to God:"\* elevation of soul and sensibility conduct us to him in the same manner.

Though Petrarch has addressed so large a proportion of his verse to Laura, his muse, as chaste as brilliant, has never rendered homage to any other than to *Venus Urania*; avoiding altogether that terrestrial Venus which inspires only what may be called wan-

\* St. Augustin.

dering strains: that kind so easy, and so insipid, the licentious images and expressions of which, seem to materialize every thing of sentiment that we may, by accident, find in such productions. Petrarch, on the contrary, has immortalized his genius and talents by the noblest subjects: he has celebrated, with equal success, religion, valour, virtue, glory, and liberty.

I have endeavoured, in this work, whenever I have made Petrarch speak, to impart a poetical colouring to his language, without robbing it of the extreme simplicity and goodness which formed essential features in his character. It has appeared to me, that even in the style of the work itself, I ought sometimes to assimilate it with that of poetry, and sometimes to assume the graver tone of history; since I had to transport myself, in the course of it, back to the most memorable epocha, and retrace the great political events in which Petrarch, by his opinions, his proceedings, his embassies, his connexions, and his writings, took a very active part;\* and

\* I have inserted in this work a concise, but scrupulously exact, historical sketch of the plot of Rienzi, as this famous conspirator was the friend of Petrarch, who

that, in short, I had to write the life of that celebrated man, who was twice-crowned in the Capitol, as historian and as poet. I have long meditated on the subject, beautiful and original as it is, of this work; and I hope I have felt and comprehended all that may be made of it. Every way inferior to Petrarch in talents, I find myself, however, continually sympathizing with him in character; in his mode of viewing things; in his feelings; in his love of study; of solitude, and the arts; and, above all, in the habitual and peculiar use which he made of his lively imagination—in ministering through it to his consolation, or his delight. Thus have I been enabled to paint, with truth, the imaginary scenes which compose so large a portion of his history; nor have I ever written any thing with more interest, gratification, and ease. Nevertheless I am far from flattering myself that I have surmounted all the difficulties of such a subject; I am too conscious that Petrarch

generously hazarded his fortune, and his repose, to save him, after his fall.

I have not spoken of the embassies of Petrarch, as he did not engage in them until after the death of Laura.

deserves an historian in the full possession of most vigorous talents.

I have spared neither reading nor research in order to make the historical part of this work as complete as possible. Petrarch has never made use of a remarkable expression which is not to be found either in the text or the notes; and the most extraordinary events in the whole romance are drawn from his own history, which presents a new species of the marvellous—that which may be produced by the heart and the imagination.

Let this work then, which is consecrated to you, find a place in that pretty library, where your friendship to me has so often shone forth: if it amuse your leisure moments, and inspire an interest in your heart, this child of my old age will, indeed, become the object of my laudable partiality.

Chateau de Carlepont,  
September 26, 1819.

# P E T R A R C H

AND

## LAURA.

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THE Muses, friends of peace, desert tumultuous cities in the time of civil discord, and the arts, however they may have flourished, soon fall into melancholy decay; for among a multitude of literary persons, and of artists, there will always be found a great number, who, to flatter the passions of a ruling party, abandon the right road, and the principles of truth, and who, protected by the factions to which they offer up their incense, find it easy to obtain academic crowns, and an ephemeral

reputation. If we suffer the harrow to pass over an extensive territory, if we throw down the barriers which separate the various departments of it, and tear up its most valuable productions by the root, we can no longer recognise where they began, or where they ended. Such, after a revolution, is the state of the arts. All is perplexity and confusion, every limit has been set aside, or over-leaped, and we know not on what to rest, or where we ought to stop. We no longer see the point which separates sublimity from bombast, boldness from extravagance, simplicity from childishness. When a calm is re-established the taste of the public continues injured, and those who have the inclination have not the power, at least for some time after, to assign the first places in literature and the arts, to those who may best deserve them. But when these

internal troubles, these intestine and bloody commotionseffect the overthrow of empires, in barbarous ages, if there should exist some wise and tranquil minds, who, shunning the din of arms, seek for repose in solitude, should a man of genius be found among them, he will be enabled to console himself in the silence of retreat by his works, and his example ; his studies, and the fruit of his midnight watchings, will lead the way for the happy resurrection of the sciences, and all the enchanting arts, the renown of which constitutes the glory of nations, and forms the most brilliant epocha in the history of past ages.\* It is difficult to revive literature, when once it has fallen into decay ; for

\* It was during the horrors of civil war, that a few scientific persons formed, under the bond of secrecy, that learned institution which has since grown into the Royal Society of London,



the corruption of the public taste discourages persons of ability—complete ignorance is preferable, because that can at least associate itself with impressions of the beautiful and the true. Dante, persecuted in Italy, compelled to fly, and conceal himself, gave to his country the first poem of which it had any reason to be proud; and a few years after his death, in times as deplorable, a genius happier still, obtained an influence over the literary glory of Italy, yet more extensive, and conspicuous.

In faithfully copying from history, I shall sketch this interesting picture, and delineate, in a poet replete with genius, the triple énthusiasm of religion, love and glory. I shall endeavour to depict a pure and generous soul, sublimed by love, and to whom friendship was a passion; a strong and

ardent imagination, even the wanderings of which were actuated by principles of virtue; a profound piety, which, even in times of superstition, never degenerated into fanaticism; a love of his country, and of fame, exempt from the bitternesses of envy, and which never led him into any excess of party spirit; a noble ambition, which disdained alike the intrigues of cabal, and the allurements of wealth; an unaffected modesty, amidst the most brilliant success; the most exalted sentiments that can animate the human heart; in short, the varied attributes of a sublime poet, blest with every sort of inspiration. Such are the different features that I have endeavoured to unite in the portrait of my hero; such was Petrarch, that most extraordinary man, still more admirable in the excellency of his character, than in the

superiority of his genius, and the rarity of his talents. It has fallen to my lot, also, to describe, in this work, that beautiful country of Europe, which reckons in its annals, so many brilliant ages, distinguished by the arts, sciences, and letters.\* To this great nation, destined to shine throughout the world which it had subjected, it was given to afford the most perfect models to all succeeding generations of artists and of scholars ; in its academies of painting and of architecture, and in its modern tongue, as well as its ancient language. Modern Rome, the fortunate rival of ancient Rome, maintains herself in triumph, upon the throne of the fine arts. This consoling power of talents, which were

\* The Augustan age—the fourteenth century. The reign of Leo X.—the age of Tasso, and our own age.

ever favourable to peace, has been enabled to preserve itself in Italy, notwithstanding the most sanguinary wars and revolutions ; and it has raised, by turns, the most admirable trophies and monuments, in the midst of the noble ruins and decay which attest its antique splendour—a rare example upon the earth of so long a course of prosperity and glory.

If ever, in the course of this work, I have deviated from the strict fidelity of an historian, it has been in speaking of the *beautiful Laura*, and surely in describing the object of a poet's love, a little fiction may be pardoned.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century, Italy, torn in pieces by the factions of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, offered the frightful spectacle of a

universal warfare.\* Laws were without vigour, magistrates without authority, the traveller without protection. Hatred and revenge filled the cities with scaffolds and with blood, and those who sought to avoid proscriptions by flight, only fell into the hands of armed robbers, with whom the roads were crowded.

In each faction were collected together men the most opposite to each other, in education, character and habits; esteem was no longer the indispensable basis of solemn engagements; contempt was no longer an obstacle to the closest connexions. These turbulent spirits were occupied with one sole design; they possessed only one soli-

\* The Guelphs supported the pretensions of the Popes; the Ghibellines espoused the cause of the Emperors.

tary virtue, enthusiasm in the cause they had undertaken. In spite of the despotism of chiefs, and the horrors of anarchy, the voice of liberty resounded from all parts, and it was impossible to listen without emotion, amid scenes where every surrounding object recalled some powerful recollection, to the tumultuous cries repeated by the echos of the Capitol, whilst the majesty of the theatre ennobled the actions and the impetuous feelings of those who uttered them.

It is true, that in the midst of these disorders, religion, outraged as she was in her precepts, still reigned in faith ; she still preserved at the bottom of the heart, the precious germ of those generous virtues with which she had invested chivalry ; the spirit of which, depressed as it was by civil war, was nevertheless so generally diffused, that

its influence was perceptible even in the most criminal associations, and often produced unexpected actions of clemency, and striking traits of heroism and elevation of soul, even in the haunts of the robber.

Whilst these factions ravaged Italy, shedding torrents of blood, burning and annihilating cities, and heaping fresh ruins on those of antiquity, a consolatory genius, the genius of the arts, sweetly diffused itself over some obscure retreats in this beautiful country. Cimabue, and Giotto, his son, discovered the art of painting; or, rather created it a second time; Arnolphe Lapi again raised architecture from the earth; Brunetto Lettini in private taught rhetoric, philosophy and eloquence; the divine Dante, his disciple, composed, in his flight, the poem throughout which his irritated muse

has scattered so many satirical allusions; Jean Villani, a keen observer, and impartial judge of the events which took place under his own eye, wrote the history of them; and Petrarch first saw the day, at Arezzo.\* At the time of his birth Petracco, his father, was in Florence, where, joining himself to the party of the Whites, he maintained a bloody combat against that of the Blacks.† The issue of it proved fatal to the Whites, whose party was joined to that of the Guelphs. They were banished from Florence; their houses razed to the ground, and their estates confiscated. Petracco and Dante were included in the proscriptions, and Petracco sought refuge at Arezzo.

\* In 1304.

† This faction united itself to the interests of the Ghibellines; the Whites espoused those of the Guelphs.



These misfortunes all originated with Charles of Valois, brother to Philip the Fair. Entrusted by the Pope, Boniface VIII, to go to Florence in the capacity of mediator, without either skill or principles adequate to the office, he embroiled himself with both parties, and rendered them irreconcilable to each other. Such was the origin of Dante's animosity against France, and the family of its kings. Some years afterwards it was expected that the exiled parties would be permitted to return to Florence, and Petrarch went with his family to Pisa, to wait for so wished-for an event. In that city Petrarch, at the age of eight years, found a skilful master who gave him his first lessons in grammar. We will not rob this ingenious man of the honour of mentioning his name, on

such an occasion : it was Convennole.\* The exiles soon found, that their hopes were fallacious, and therefore resolved upon taking a final leave of their country! The family of Petrarch, whose ancestors had always exercised honourable and lucrative employments in Florence, collected together the scattered remnants of a fortune which, until the major part of it was confiscated, had been considerable, and embarked at Livourne for Avignon, where they intended to seek refuge. Petrarch was carried along with his parents, and shed many tears as the shores of Italy receded from his view. At his tender

\* He was not without talent, but deficient in method and industry; he composed nothing beyond the outline of some works. Petrarch, in his letters praises his method of teaching, and compares him to the whetstone, which has the power of sharpening instruments, but not of cutting.

age reflection cannot be sufficiently powerful to inspire grief—in him it was a generous instinct; the same noble feeling of love towards his country, which was so important in its consequences to his future destiny. The vessel which had this interesting family on board, was wrecked near the port of Marseilles; no lives however were lost, and they proceeded by land to Avignon. This city, rendered yet more famous by the passion and the poetry of Petrarch, than by the political events of which it has been the theatre, is situated on the left shore of the Rhone, between Lyons and Marseilles, near the mouth of the Sorgue and the Durance. After belonging to the counts of Toulouse, and the kings of France, it had been ceded, by Philip the Fair, to Charles II, king of Naples; who was sovereign of it just

when the Popes, alarmed at the troubles of Italy, and dissatisfied with the Romans, had chosen it for their residence in 1309. On the death of Charles, his son Robert mounted the throne; a virtuous and enlightened prince; a friend to literature, which he cultivated with success, and rewarded with discernment; and finally, a passionate admirer of Petrarch, and his most illustrious benefactor.

Petrarch's early education was excellent, his youthful mind was stored with religious precepts, and virtuous examples. His happy memory, and predilection for study, early inspired his father with a wish to turn his attention to the law; which was, at that time, the only career in which a fortune might be hoped to be acquired, by those who had courage enough to plunge themselves into the labyrinth

of a study so obscure and so perplexed ; and sufficient strength and subtilty of mind either to unravel and destroy its captious chicaneries, or to make them the groundwork of interminable arguments : for such was the state of jurisprudence, at this period. Petrarch was sent to Carpentras, twelve miles from Avignon, to finish his studies, and here he found Convennole, who had probably the honour of giving him his first lessons in the art of poetry.— He often made little journies to Avignon. His progress astonished his masters ; *Prosper* and *Esop's* fables were the only authors allowed, at that time, to children who were learning latin ; but Petrarch had found the works of *Cicero* among his father's books ; and read them with avidity, though yet incapable of appreciating their full beauty. A short time after his arrival at Car-

pentras, some events took place which had a powerful effect upon his imagination. Pope Clement V died, and the divisions among the Italian and Gascon cardinals produced quarrels which terminated in bloodshed. Many Italians were killed, the Roman tradespeople were plundered, and the conclave was set fire to. The cardinals, who were shut up in it, were forced to make a breach in the walls, in order to escape, and the uproar terrified them so completely that they dispersed, and it was two years before they could be prevailed upon to assemble again.

Petrarch, at thirteen years old, being at Avignon, went, for the first time, to visit the fountain of Vaucluse. It is a spacious cavern, and streams of the purest crystal form a large basin, in the centre of this beautiful grotto, the picturesque aspect, and solitary

situation of which awakened the most lively enthusiasm in Petrarch's youthful bosom: it was a presentiment.—“What a delightful retreat!” he exclaimed; “if ever I become the possessor of it, I shall prefer it, far beyond the most magnificent cities.”

The following year Petrarch was sent to Montpellier, to study the law. This beautiful city is in Languedoc, forty-eight miles from Avignon, and was at that time the property of James of Aragon; with the exception of one corner, which belonged to the king of France, who soon obtained possession of the rest; a thing which will always happen, Petrarch afterwards said, to those who have powerful neighbours. Every thing concurred to render this city prosperous; the beauty of its situation, the ingenious industry of its inhabitants, the tranquillity which it enjoyed under its paternal government,

the flourishing state of its commerce, the fame of its university, celebrated for its skilful professors, and, above all, the deliciousness of its climate afforded perpetual attractions. Petrarch, however, during his stay at Montpellier, occupied himself much less with law, than with the study of Cicero; to which he soon added that of Virgil; which had the effect of developing his passionate fondness for poetry. At this period it was that Dante died. That unfortunate bard, who was persecuted during his life, and deified after his death. Petrarch heard of the extraordinary honours which were paid to his memory, and the recital fired his imagination. He was careless of wealth; but he was avaricious of glory. Petracco, finding that his son, instead of applying himself to the law, passed his nights in reading Cicero and Virgil,



and amused himself with re-touching the romance of Péter of Provence, and the beautiful Maguelonne,\* thought he had better send him to some university yet more celebrated than that of Montpellier. There were two of still higher renown ; Paris and Bologna ; as much famed, at that time, for the sciences, as Athens and Rome had been in their brightest days. Lewis Hutin, who reigned in France at this period, has, in one of his ordinances, made a memorable eulogium upon the university of Paris ; saying that to it, faith owed its preservation, society its politeness, and the whole world its knowledge and information. The monarch who could thus appreciate this grand and beautiful institution, is himself well deserving of praise. Petrarch, by sin-

\* Put into verse in 1178, by Bernard de Trivies, Canon of Maguelonne.

gular good fortune, which we may almost call a kindly interference of Providence, found at Bologna, among the professors of the law, the two best poets of which Italy, at that time, could boast. The period was approaching when Petrarch was to cause them to be forgotten; but in the meanwhile their instructions were useful to him. The name of one was Cecco, who afterwards fell into the most extravagant and censurable errors, and became the deplorable victim of a horrible intolerance. The other was Cino, a celebrated counsellor, an elegant versifier, and one of those flexible minds that can bend themselves to every thing with success. He addressed a profound commentary to Bologna, upon the code and the digest, at the same time that he was celebrating his friend Richard Selvaggi, in verses full of grace. The Italians

esteem Cino as the most harmonious and agreeable poet they had before the time of Petrarch. His three pupils, however, Petrarch, Boccacio, and Bartholemo, have been a much greater source of reputation to him than any of his own poetry has proved. The lectures on jurisprudence which interested Petrarch the most, at the university of Bologna, were those which he heard from the learned and beautiful Novella, the daughter of Professor Jean-André, who often deputed her to fill the chair in his stead; and in order to prevent her personal attractions from diverting the attention of the students, she used to lecture from behind a curtain, which concealed her from every eye.

Cino and Cecco attached themselves particularly to Petrarch, who made a rapid progress in poetry, under his two

masters. At first he composed latin verses, but the example of Dante encouraged him to write in his own language, without however neglecting latin poetry, which he always continued to cultivate. Petrarch was convinced that a poet can only attain perfection in his art, by uniting, in his own mind, every species of information which it may be capable of embracing. He therefore disdained not any species of instruction. He had a great desire to travel, and he joyfully embraced the offer of one of his preceptors, who was going to Venice, to carry him along with him. Petrarch was filled with admiration at the sight of this wonderful and flourishing city, in which, along with its rival, Genoa, almost all the commerce of Europe centered. A short time after his return to Bologna, he was much affected by the intel-

ligence of the death of his mother, whose eulogy he made in some affecting verses, the only production of his muse, at this period, which he has preserved. His father soon followed his wife to the grave, and Petrarch, at the age of twenty-one, was obliged to go to Avignon with his brother Gerard, younger than himself, to seek out the poor remains of their inheritance. These two orphans, without connexions, without support, without fortune, had to defend themselves against the knavery of the trustees who had been appointed for them in their absence ; and it was only to the ignorance of these men that Petrarch owed the possession of the manuscripts belonging to his father ; which they did not carry away with them, solely because they did not know the value of them.

Convennole, Petrarch's old master,

loaded with age and infirmities, and in the greatest distress, had retired to Avignon; Petrarch, as soon as he heard of it; flew to his assistance, gave him all the money he possessed; and, by proper caution in his service, freed him entirely from his creditors. To raise his spirits, he then lent him two precious manuscripts of Cicero's works, in which was contained that treatise on Glory, which is now supposed not to exist. Convenutole was so deficient in delicacy and gratitude, as to put these manuscripts into pledge: he died; Petrarch was absent, and they were lost. Petrarch bitterly regretted them; for his passion for Cicero, far from becoming weak, had grown with his growth, and with the developement of his mind and reason; the just resentment, however, that he felt against the old man, did not prevent him from

weeping over his grave, and writing the most respectful epitaph on him, which was placed upon his tomb.

Petrarch, before he thought of seeking for patronage, was resolved to make himself worthy of it. He knew that the surest, as well as noblest way for a young man to make his fortune, was to render himself capable of being entrusted with the most honorable employments. He abandoned jurisprudence; in vain Oldradi, and many other lawyers, conjured him not to give it up. "Nature," replied he, "has not given me a taste for it; and whatever is done in her despight, is always ill done." He, therefore, gave himself up to the study of history, politics and poetry, with equal ardour and perseverance. Situated as he was, he had to contend with obstacles that appeared insurmountable. The art of printing was

at that time not known; there were no books; nothing but manuscripts were to be procured, and of them the cost was enormous; besides which, they were confined to latin, and to bad translations from the greek authors. Petrarch, with scarcely the means of subsistence, was in no condition to buy them; but he was fortunate enough to find immense resources in the friendship of Raimond Soranzo, who lived at Avignon: this old doctor had a fine library, of which he made scarcely any use; for, like most in his profession, he regarded all authors with contempt, excepting those who wrote upon law. Livy, alone, had found grace in his eyes, and his works he read with the greatest pleasure; nevertheless, though he was not very deficient in quickness and intelligence, yet, as he had not the slightest acquaintance with history, he



often found himself at a loss in perusing them. Petrarch, who idolized the greatness of Rome, had, from his earliest years, made Livy his particular study. He read it with Raimond Soranzo, and explained to him every passage which he had any difficulty in understanding. This occasioned a most intimate acquaintance between them. The old lawyer, treating the young poet as his son, lent, and even gave him the most valuable books, and permitted his library to be open to him at all hours. Petrarch quite lived in it. He likewise formed another connexion, which promised to be of much service to him ; he became the cherished disciple, and intimate friend of the learned John of Florence, canon of Pisa, and one of the secretaries of the Pope ; a place of honour which was only conferred upon persons of extraordinary

merit. Petrarch conceived the greatest affection for him, and chose him for the director of his studies. He called this venerable old man his father, and confided all his thoughts and projects to him; he even confessed his faults to him, asked his advice, and found, he said, so much pleasure in obeying him, that the severity of the sacrifices, he required of him, were unfelt. In the midst, however, of his most serious and assiduous occupations, he suddenly took a sort of dislike to study which mortified him beyond every thing. He had attained that degree of information which enabled him to take in, at a glance, the whole extent of human knowledge; to distinguish every different link of the chain of which it is composed, and the immense length of it which he must make himself master of, who wishes really to

attain superiority in mental excellence. Petrarch was less satisfied with what he had attained, than frightened at what remained to be done; he was almost in despair; and flying to John of Florence, "Father," said he, "you know all that I have done, to rise above the multitude, and acquire myself a name; you are of all men, the most sincere, and the best judge of the human mind. You have praised me continually; you have often told me that I should be answerable to God, for the talents he has bestowed upon me, if I neglected to cultivate them; your praises have stimulated my ardour in study, and I have not lost a single moment. Disdaining beaten roads, I have endeavoured to open a new path for myself; but all at once, just as I was thinking to attain the object of my pursuit, it appears to me

that I am in search of a chimera. Fatigued with the too ambitious effort, I sink confounded and overwhelmed: what I formerly thought so easy, now seems beyond my reach.... I see that I know nothing!..... Father," he continued, bursting into tears, "have pity on me! draw me out of the frightful abyss into which I am fallen!... "

At these words, John of Florence embraced him, and replied: "Do not afflict yourself, my son; when you thought you knew so much, it was then that you knew nothing; now the mist is cleared, and you see before you the race you have to run; that alone is a grand step towards science. Congratulate yourself on having made it so early. The higher the eminence on which we are raised, the greater is the multitude of objects we discover, of whose existence we were before ignorant.

The further we sail upon the ocean, the more we are astonished at its immensity ; the more we feel the value of a good pilot. Persevere, courageously, in the career you have entered upon, by my advice, and depend upon it, you will ultimately justify my expectations."

Petrarch listened to his venerable friend with delight ; his words seemed to restore all his tranquillity, and his passion for study revived with its wonted ardour.

At this time latin, having ceased to be used as the language of conversation, was only understood by scholars. Several authors, among whom Dante stood the foremost, had already enriched the vulgar tongue with their works ; but it was still in a very rude state when Petrarch did it the honour to prefer it to latin, as the poetical vehicle

of his feelings and sentiments. He confesses, in his letters, that the thing which most contributed to fix him in his choice of it, was the desire of being understood by the ladies. Should the motive be deemed frivolous, it is, at least, one so flattering to the female sex that I could not pass it over in silence. The jargon that was then spoken at Avignon had a great resemblance to italian; a corrupted latin being the source of both; and the residence of the Roman Court, for so many years in the city, increased the points of conformity between them, by which means all the ladies of Provence understood Petrarch's poetry as well as the Italians. "Moreover," as he has observed in his letters, "the latin language had been carried, both in prose and verse, to a degree of perfection which admitted not of increase, whilst the italian

language and poetry, only lately begun to be weeded and cleared away, falling first of all into very-bad hands, and afterwards into those of a very limited number of good cultivators, was still susceptible of great embellishments and acquisitions." He was not deceived in his view of the subject; in fact, he ornamented and brought to perfection this enchanting and harmonious language of Tasso, of Ariosto, of so many other distinguished names. The lovers of literature likewise owe Petrarch several other obligations; to him we are indebted for a great part of the ancient authors which have come down to us; throughout the whole course of his life, he spared neither money nor pains to possess himself of manuscripts, and took many tedious journies in search of them. He sent for the famous Leontius Pilate from Constantinople, who

taught him greek, and assisted him in his researches after manuscripts in that language. He not only had copies of them made under his own eyes, but transcribed them with his own hand. He loved to circulate them, though he was very anxious to form a library, which became, in time, one of the finest in Italy, and was thrown open to the public, after his death, according to his desire. Far from feeling any of the foolish avarice of vulgar-minded scholars, who only relish this kind of wealth when they have the exclusive enjoyment of it, he was too sincerely interested in the progress of literature not to assist those who cultivated it, by every means in his power.

Petrarch, in his letters to his friends, has drawn his own portrait, and describes his mind as being like his body : active, rather than strong ; just,



rather than penetrating ; capable of any species of refined study, but more especially inclined to moral philosophy and poetry. This, however, was having too modest an opinion of himself ; for his poetry, his letters, and his orations, abound with passages full of strength and energy.

He often read the ancient philosophers ; but, however, he might admire them, he knew their faults, and inconsistencies ; the defects of their morality, and the extravagance of their theories. " I love truth," said he, " and not sects. I am sometimes a peripatetic, sometimes a stoic, sometimes an academician, sometimes nothing at all ; but still, at all times, a christian. Let us read history, poetry or philosophy ; but let us never lose sight of those sacred truths where alone true wisdom and true happiness are found." His precepts were never

contradicted by his practice ; and he early placed himself under the direction of a person remarkable for his piety, father Denis, who exercised, until the day of his death, as absolute a dominion over the conscience of Petrarch, as John of Florence had over his mind and heart.

By degrees the reputation of Petrarch began to be spread abroad ; or rather his friends, who were excellent judges of merit, began to make it known ; and in praising him with so much enthusiasm, they had the credit of foretelling the appearance of a distinguished character. Nature, who had lavished on Petrarch so many uncommon endowments, so many talents, and so much genius, had likewise delighted to adorn them with every advantage of exterior appearance ; it was not only, that his features were noble and regular, but his countenance was also so spirited

and expressive as to rivet all eyes. No one had more sweetness and vivacity in conversation ; he was the life of every company : for, notwithstanding his occupations and studies, he had nothing unsocial in him ; it is true he prized solitude above every thing ; but when he was in the world, he never avoided society : hence he was always sought after, and, without efforts, he was always agreeable. Sometimes he repeated verses ; sometimes he sung them, and accompanied them with his lute ; the cherished lute, so justly celebrated, which he carried about with him every where ; which he never lost sight of, and which, with his dying breath, he left to his most intimate companion ; and never was friendship illustrated by a more touching remembrance, a more brilliant legacy ! About this time Petrarch acquired a new protector ;

yet more distinguished by his sense, his courage, and his rare qualifications, than by his illustrious birth. It was James Colonna, who wished to be acquainted with Petrarch, and he, though he had not taken any step towards making himself known to him, yet received his advances with equal respect and gratitude. James Colonna had not then put on the sacred habit, and had shewn, during the troubles in Italy, great valour, and the most admirable firmness. He admired Petrarch excessively, and presented him, himself, at the pontifical court; the most brilliant in Europe from its magnificence, the wealth of the cardinals, and the value that was attached, in its circle, to the cultivation of the mind, and of the fine arts. It was even reproached with affecting a degree of elegance which, in a court of that description, might be

deemed as unexpected, as it certainly was delightful. Petrarch found his reception there such as friendship had assured him it would be. James Colonna presented him to his brother the Cardinal, and to Etienne Colonna, his father; the two most distinguished personages at the court. To the wit, which seemed the hereditary possession of his house, the Cardinal joined all the virtues peculiarly fitting to his situation; and Etienne Colonna, celebrated for a thousand noble deeds of greatness and intrepidity, was the hero of Italy. Being formerly persecuted at Rome, and compelled to fly, he fell alone, and in the midst of a forest, into the hands of an armed troop, which was sent in pursuit of him. He was stopped and interrogated; nothing could have been easier for him than to have concealed his name, but too proud

to deny it in the hour of peril, he added to its greatness, by replying, without hesitation, *I am Etienne Colonna*. The very people, who were paid to make themselves master of his person, were struck with admiration, and crying out with one voice, *go on*, they suffered him to proceed. Petrarch has expressed, in some beautiful verses, the enthusiasm which he felt on seeing this magnanimous warrior. His muse, chaste, noble, and affecting, had hitherto only celebrated the goodness of God, the charms of solitude, great men, heroic actions, and the objects of his general affections. A new sentiment, which he had never yet experienced, was soon to lead him to new glory.

Petrarch often tore himself from the circles at Avignon, whose delight he constituted, to make little excursions, along with his brother Gerard, in the

most solitary environs of the city ; there night often surprised them, and more than once, the brothers were obliged to seek for a place of repose in a cottage. The youthful Gerard had not the genius of Petrarch ; he was nevertheless fond of poetry, and wrote it prettily enough. Petrarch had the tenderest affection for him, and never separated himself from him, even at court ; for he profited by the favour he was held in there, not to ask for places, but to put his brother on the same footing in the world that he was himself, and to gain him the most honorable admittance at court, and into society. One of the distinguishing marks of great characters is, that they exalt all who belong to them ; all who come near them. Mind and talents can give the noblest ascendancy in society, and it was exercised by Petrarch, even

before he had acquired that shining reputation, which obliterates all difference of condition and ranks. It was an interesting spectacle to see two young persons, without fortune, connexions or experience, of an obscure and plebian family, sought after, received, and served, by men proud of their birth, their distinctions, or their possessions; and who would never have admitted, among them, any of the middling rank, however wealthy, if deprived of the advantages of birth. Happy are those people of rank, who have sufficient discernment and elevation of mind to render such homage to superior merit, and who know how to make a right use of the enviable privilege of establishing, at once, the reputation of men of genius, as yet unknown, and investing them with their first titles of honour.



One day Petrarch, returning from one of his solitary rambles, after having passed the night in a fisherman's hut, arrived at the gates of Avignon at six o'clock, in the morning. It was Easter-Monday. He felt as if that day was to form an interesting epoch in his life. In conformity with his habits of devotion, whenever he returned to the city at an early hour, he resolved to offer up his prayers in a public place of worship, and the church of St. Clara being in his road, he went into it. As the Holy week had begun, the church, according to the custom of the season, was hung with black, and the first impression on the ardent and susceptible soul of Petrarch, as he advanced towards the religious sanctuary, where he was going to contemplate the solemn mysteries connected with his future state, was one of profound melancholy.

Our destiny is entirely in the affections of the heart ! Pétrarch was about to become acquainted with his, and (sorrowful omen) all that he at first perceived, all that surrounded him, recalled to him only the most mournful ideas of sacrifice and death ! . . . . He threw himself on his knees ; but, at the end of a few minutes, casting his eyes around him, he perceived, towards his right-hand, not ten steps before him, an object which rivetted all his attention. It was a young lady who was kneeling with her back towards him ; but he could not behold, without the liveliest admiration, the perfect beauty of her figure, her neck, her light hair, and the elegance of her attire. She had on a green robe, embroidered with violets ; the most humble of flowers, but, at that time, the most celebrated and fashionable ; in consequence of the

institution, a short time before, of the Floral Games, in which a golden violet was adjudged as the prize to the victor. Her throat was ornamented with a collar of pearls and rubies ; her beautiful flaxen tresses were fastened up beneath a coronet of filigreed gold, set with precious stones. Petrarch ardently hoped that the face of this young incognita would prove worthy of her figure and her dress, or rather he doubted not that it was so. He impatiently waited for her to turn round ; his eagerness soon grew into a violent agitation, all the presentiments of love seemed to be preparing him for what he was shortly to experience ; but when the fair unknown rose up, and came towards him, in her way out of the church, he felt that there are impressions of which not the most ardent and poetical imagination can give even an idea. Im-

moveable, still on his knees, his hands still clasped together, his eyes fixed upon her, he contemplated her with the most profound emotion. Their looks met; the young lady, who had heard Petrarch spoken of a thousand times, started and blushed. She felt certain that it was indeed Petrarch whom she beheld; she repeated his name to herself, and that name, which was to owe its immortality to her, was for ever engraven in the inmost folds of her heart. She retired very slowly, for though she did not venture to turn her head, she was yet unwilling to leave him behind her. Petrarch followed her with his eyes, and in imagination he followed her into the street; but his brother just then coming in, drew him out of his delightful reverie; he did not fail, however, to make enquiries respecting the young lady, and

found that her name was Laura; that she was the daughter of Chevalier Audibert de Noves, that Ermessenda, her mother, had been a widow several years, and that Laura herself, was twenty years of age, and unmarried. Until the period when Petrarch saw this young beauty for the first time, she had lived with her mother at the castle de Noves, thirty-six miles from Avignon; but Ermessenda had just then bought a house in that city, with the intention of residing there until Laura's marriage, an event which she was determined upon shortly taking place.

As soon as Petrarch returned home, he shut himself up in his own room; he wished to be alone, he desired no confidant, indeed what earthly being could have entered into what was passing in his soul! It was only in the bosom of his muse that he could deposit

his hopes, his fears, his new existence. It seemed to him as if his powers were doubled ; as if all the gods of Pindus were ready to obey his call ; a sudden inspiration lifts him above himself, it is now indeed that he is a poet, for it is to Laura that he strikes the lyre !

.....He could not deny himself the pleasure of shewing these verses to his friends, his patrons ; he called them his first performance ; they were full of brilliancy and animation ; they were admired, copied, quoted, spread throughout the city, and for several days nothing was talked of but these two interesting names, which, in spite of fate and fortune, were destined to be for ever inseparably united.

The beautiful name of Laura, owing its derivation to the laurel, proved an inexhaustible source of allusions, and fictions to Petrarch ; admitting, as a

poet, the doctrine of the metempsychosis, he described the soul of Daphne, after inhabiting for ages the famous tree which is the symbol of glory, as disengaging itself from its melancholy prison, and animating the loveliest nymph on the shores of the Sorgue, and the Durance. In short, Petrarch befriended by Love, and in no need of the help of Apollo, became his rival, and far from imploring his assistance, delighted in teasing and defying him ; nevertheless, he envied him the pleasure of seeing Laura adorn herself by his brilliant light, and every day he lamented when the withdrawing of that light deprived him of the happiness of contemplating her whom he adored. Still oftener, however, forgetting all these fictions, and listening only to his own heart, he expressed the sublimest thoughts and

the most passionate feelings, in the simplest verses: at that time, they were less admired than the others; but Laura preferred them, and posterity has shewn itself of her opinion.

Petrarch saw Laura again at an assembly, and discovered in her new charms. He heard her harmonious voice, which he has so often celebrated in his poetry; he sought not to conceal from her sentiments with which all the world was already acquainted, and Laura could not hide the emotion with which she listened to them. But from that day Ermessenda commanded her daughter to avoid Petrarch, in consequence of which, she carefully avoided every place where she might otherwise have met with him. The birth and fortune of Laura might be deemed insurmountable obstacles to the wishes of a lover deprived of such advantages,



and who, in fact, had neither rank nor station in society; but a poetical and romantic imagination sees only additional motives for success in the difficulties which are opposed to its desires. Ambition, where not absolutely discouraged, must excite and exalt—it cannot remain stationary: like all other passions, if it do not diminish and fade away, it must increase. Petrarch was deeply in love, he heartily despised mere wealth—his whole life evinced his contempt of it; but he was not insensible to the honour of obtaining a preference over rivals of illustrious birth, and of subduing the pride even of Ermessenda herself. This thought redoubled both his industry and the ardour of his passion. His eager longing for success, he took as the proof that he should gain it; and, indeed, with merit like his,

such a feeling is its most certain presage.

One day, Petrarch walking alone in the meadows, near the gates of the city, saw a female kneeling on the banks of a stream, drawing out of the water a large veil of dazzling whiteness. Petrarch was agitated in a moment—he came nearer, saying to himself, “My heart tells me that that veil belongs to Laura;” he was not mistaken—he knelt down beside the woman who was holding the precious veil, and insisted on helping her to press the water from it. The woman laughed. “I know you are Petrarch,” said she. “I am,” he replied, with animation, “and to-morrow I will plant a laurel on this very spot.” Accordingly, the next day, at sunrise, he planted there, with his own hand, the shrub which he afterwards made the subject of one

of his most beautiful sonnets. All this display of passion and gallantry affected the object of it as much as it alarmed her mother. Laura was ordered to vary her walks every day, in order to avoid any premeditated rencontres ; but, above all, she was forbidden to go near the stream, which Petrarch's newly-planted laurel, and his verses rendered so celebrated, that its banks became all at once the favourite walks of lovers, and of poets. Petrarch, elated with his success, gave himself up to the most delightful hopes ; but during two months, he never saw Laura, even by accident, though he most assiduously sought her at every opportunity. He then learned that she, with a party of her young friends, was going to see the fountain of Vaucluse ; it was to be kept quite a mystery, by the order of Ermessenda, who was

prevented by business from accompanying them. The secret was however betrayed by the amiable Isoarda de Roquefeuille; she was the dearest friend of Laura, and favoured Petrarch's attachment to her. He, being informed of the day and the hour, was in the grotto long before Laura arrived. He had taken his lute with him, and beguiled the time of waiting for her, by accompanying it with his voice. Laura heard him at a distance—her friends cried out that it was Petrarch, and all begun to speak in his praise. Laura blushed, and looked reproachfully at Isoarda; but she only smiled.

On entering the grotto, they found it filled with laurels, which had been carried there the night before, in vases, which formed a half circle round the fountain, and were linked together by chains of flowers. Petrarch was stand-

ing at the edge of the basin, with his lute in his hand; and abandoning himself to the double intoxication of love and poetry, he sung in honour of Laura, and the nymphs who accompanied her; and the favoured fountain which he consecrated to immortality in his enchanting strains. It was as if Apollo, surrounded by the Muses, was singing on the flowery borders of the Hypocrene. The delighted Isoarda suggested to her companions to crown him with the laurels with which he had ornamented the grotto. A wreath was soon formed—Laura, with downcast eyes, had entwined some of its leaves; and when it was presented to Petrarch, she hid herself behind Isoarda; but Petrarch saw her image, reflected in the limpid waters of the fountain; her companions made her come forward, and take a part in holding the wreath.

At the very moment that she looked towards Petrarch, they all withdrew their hands, and stepping back, left her, as it were, alone to crown her lover with it. Petrarch threw himself on his knees; his lute escaped from his hands, and lay at the feet of the trembling Laura, who let the wreath fall upon the lyre, so original, so melodious and so brilliant. Petrarch caught it up again, with transport, and pressed it to his heart: from that moment it became more than ever dear to him; he vowed it should never be separated from him, and it has indeed, shared in all his triumphs over his rivals, both in love and fame.

It was impossible that Ermessenda could remain ignorant of this scene. Laura was interrogated concerning it: she replied candidly; she wept, and acknowledged her sentiments:—her

mother told her haughtily that she must conquer them ; and the very next day, abruptly quitting Avignon, she took her back to the castle de Noves. But what a desert did Laura now find the beautiful country she had before been so fond of ! with what indifference did she behold every object that had before delighted her ! One of the most lamentable effects of a violent passion is that of rendering insipid the innocent and sweet remembrances which are treasured up with so much delight by a tranquil mind. Laura sighed when she saw in the distance the turrets of the ancient castle, which was no longer any thing to her but a prison. She scarcely perceived the young girls who came to present her with flowers, on her arrival. She heard without regret of the death of the lamb she had reared herself ; and looked without any gra-

tification, at her two turtle doves, and the orange-trees planted by her own hand. But the next day, as she was walking in the park, she could not behold with indifference two laurels which grew close to each other. She recollected that Petrarch went every day to play upon his lute beneath the laurel at the side of the stream ; she repeated the sonnet that he had made upon that cherished shrub. " And I likewise," she exclaimed, " will come every day, at " the first blush of morning, to meditate " under the shade of these branches. I " will fancy I hear the strains of that delightful lute which he threw at my feet, " and those enchanting verses which " have for ever robbed me of happiness " and repose ! . . . . " Whilst Laura thus abandoned herself to the profoundest melancholy, Petrarch no less lamented her absence ; but his regrets animated his muse with new fire, and he found



some consolation in expressing them in beautiful verse.

It was at this time, that he composed his celebrated Canzonets upon Laura's eyes, which are so much admired by the Italians that they term them *the three sisters*, to express their sense of the equal beauties of each. Every day he saw Isoarda, one of his sincerest admirers, and his greatest friend, with respect to his passion for Laura. Isoarda was one of the ladies of the Court of Love, which was just then established at Avignon. The other ladies of that society, who were the most distinguished for their genius and attractions; were Clemence Isaure, who afterwards consecrated to poetry the flowers she chose for her device—the bashful marigold, and the rural eglantine; joining them with the golden violet of the Floral Games; Eloisa, Countess of Bauffremont; Brianda d'Agoult,

Countess of Lima ; Hugnetta de Forcalquier ; Amable de Villeneuve, Baroness de Vency ; Blanche fleur de Flasans ; Douce de Moustiers, Baroness de Clumang ; Phanette de Ganteline ; Rixende de Puivert, Baroness de Trans ; the beautiful Brunissenda, niece of the Cardinal Elie de Talleyrand, and many others.

This brilliant association, erected at once into an academy and a tribunal, met at certain seasons of the year, to read poetry, to propose enigmas ; and lastly, to sit in judgment on the behaviour of knights to the ladies, whose colours they wore, and the grievances of lovers who submitted their complaints to them. They would frequently, on any particular accusation, cite an unfaithful lover to appear before them ; and in such cases he was obliged, both by custom and courtesy, to comply,

and to submit to the sentence which might be pronounced against him. They likewise occasionally discussed questions of a subtle and delicate nature, on which the ladies were referred to for their decision.—Such was the *Court*, or *Parliament of Love*.

It is difficult to conceive the existence of so much gallantry, at a time when all Europe was convulsed with foreign or civil wars. Doubtless, there was much of pedantry, and unprofitableness, in the regulations of these societies, and in the subjects with which they chiefly occupied themselves. It must not be forgotten, however, that they criticised poetry, as well as the conduct of faithless or discontented lovers; and they may be considered, in some measure, as the first literary society established in France. It was very natural to give them the form of

schools ; for, until that time, eloquence had been confined entirely to the universities, and the courts of justice. In the age of chivalry, love, which, in public opinion, was entirely distinct from mere inclinations of fancy, was pure and faithful, and made a part of honor. Hence, the proceedings and disputes which arose out of this sentiment, had nothing frivolous connected with them, but rather a considerable degree of importance : for reputation itself was influenced by the decisions respecting them. To these singular institutions, which only existed in France, at least originally, and for a long time after their foundation, these dissertations upon the passions, and upon delicacy of sentiment, conducted by women of refinement and rank, we are doubtless indebted for much of our taste for conversation, and for the plea-

tures of the mind ; and to them likewise we may owe that perfection of politeness, and of gallantry, which has rendered France the model of all Europe. The noble and generous gallantry of the ancient knights, originated in the loftiest principles, founded on the solid basis of universal morality. Of this exalted friendship, love, and antique loyalty, there remains nothing but a sort of beautiful varnish, which no longer proceeds from our manners, but which still retains an influence over them ; not only concealing their deterioration, but often supplying the place of the departed virtues of which it is the representative. There are a number of trifling duties, and delicate attentions which would not exist without it : true, it is a mask, but yet it is one that we well know we cannot lay aside without appearing hideous ; we, there-

fore, wear it at least as long as we are looked at, and it is a great deal to retain ; it is even wonderful and contradictory, that we should retain so much of it in an age when there is a prejudice against every opinion and sentiment which our ancestors entertained ; yet if they were so narrow minded, so deficient in intelligence, and good sense, what makes every thing that reminds us of them so interesting ? Why is it that the surest way to inspire confidence, to obtain esteem, and to excite admiration, is to persuade those around us that we are restrained by the same scruples, actuated by the same principles, animated by the same heroic sentiments. Such were the most renowned characters in the age in which Petrarch lived, and consequently such was Petrarch himself.

It was not merely by Isoarda, that

Petrarch's love was encouraged, the family of Colonna, openly protected it. Etienna and James Colonna had repeatedly told Ermessenda, in their conversations with her, that they had taken the care of Petrarch's fortune upon themselves; but pride of birth rendered her inflexible. At that time, however, there existed another sort of pride, still more exalted, more lofty, and more commanding: a pride which preferred glory to riches, rank, dignities, or even happiness itself. The enthusiasm which gives birth to the most elevated ideas, will never be inspired by any counterfeit species of fame. It is, in fact, only the excess of an ardent admiration for virtue, as united to powerful talents, or producing heroic actions. Thus Petrarch and his friends, notwithstanding the refusals and the scorn of Ermessenda, expected from time

and his own renown, the most favourable result to his passion.

The reputation of Petrarch, soon acquired new splendour, from his delightful Ode to James Colonna; a poetical gem of the first water. James Colonna was at that time engaged in preaching a new crusade, for the deliverance of the Holy Land from the yoke of the Infidels. This Ode began

“ O aspetta in ciel beata  
E bella anima ———.”

James Colonna had embraced the ecclesiastical profession about a year before, after having rendered Pope John 22d a signal service at Rome, by an action as intrepid as it was singular. The Pope gave him the bishopric of Lombez, and wishing to take possession of it, James Colonna asked Petrarch to accompany him on



his journey, and he complied with the request ; for he was distressed beyond measure at the thoughts of Laura being shut up for seven months, in an old castle, where nothing could recal him to her mind. He hoped that if he left Avignon she might be permitted to return to it ; and, in that case, that Isoarda would describe his unhappiness, and repeat his verses to her ; and that she would likewise hear his praises from his numerous admirers. These considerations determined him to go with the bishop of Lombez. They set out at the end of March, and had to go entirely through Languedoc, in their route from Avignon to Lombez. They first went to Montpellier, with which Petrarch was well acquainted, and then to Narbonne. Petrarch full of enthusiasm for Rome and her history, which was the principal subject

of his studies, was delighted at the sight of this interesting city, where the Romans established their first colony, among the Gauls, and which Cicero calls the watch-box, and bulwark of the Roman Empire. This colony consisted entirely of Roman citizens, and to render their exile from the capital of the world more tolerable to them, care was taken to place models of some of its beauties, before their eyes. They erected at Narbonne, a capitol, a theatre, baths, triumphal arches, and a temple of Parian marble. Thus at once softening their regret for the grandeur of Rome, and perpetuating their recollection of it. Almost all these monuments are now destroyed; but Petrarch found some remains of them, and collected a great number of Roman inscriptions. From Narbonne our travellers proceeded to Toulouse,

and passed several days in this city, which was formerly stiled the Rome of Garonne ; a glorious title, which it merited from its successful cultivation of poetry, literature, and the sciences. A title which Narbonne never obtained, though it acted a much more important part in history. The poetic ground of Toulouse was always dear to the Muses, and by them it has been consigned to immortality.

The bishop of Lombez, a passionate lover, both of letters and of verse, wished exceedingly to become acquainted with some of the most distinguished provençal poets ; and particularly with Armand Vidal de Castelnaudari, who had had the honour to carry off the first golden violet. The polish and perfection which Petrarch had bestowed upon the Italian language, did not make him disdain the proven-

gal dialect, which may be considered as remaining in perpetual infancy. He was pleased with its unstudied grace and simplicity ; and was fond of bearing the young poets recite in it, sing their verses, and relate their attachments. On their parts, they spoke to him of Laura, for they were familiar with the name which love and genius had already rendered so celebrated ; they listened with eagerness to the sonnets, the canzonets and madrigals he had composed on her ; and every evening of the Bishop's stay at Toulouse, was passed in these various recitals. In one of these parties, at which the lute and verses of Petrarch had formed the chief entertainment, Armand de Castelnau-dari spoke of a tale in verse, which he had recently composed, and promised to read it to the company. The next evening, therefore, they all as-

seemed to hear it. Armand after the ordinary preamble used by authors of every age on similar occasions, unfolded his manuscript, and read the story of which the following lines present a translation.

#### ELIZABETH OF BAVARIA.

Among the immortal goddesses of Parnassus, there is one less brilliant, less known than her nine sisters ; she is not the daughter of the sovereign of Olympus ; the offspring of the mysterious loves of Mnemosyne, and the calm god of Silence, she drew her first breath in the bosom of the Lysian deserts. The tree whose weeping branches bend over the stream, and the mournful cypress are consecrated to her. Plaintive and solitary, she flies from noise, and pomp, and glare, and

•

loves to wander amidst wilds and wastes, and twilight shades. Hope and imagination sustain her unequal steps, and form, notwithstanding the veil they persist in retaining over their features, the charm of her lengthened meditations. Soft and touching recollections, tender pity, anxious friendship, love enveloped in tears and mystery, compose her noiseless train; and she may be found wandering in the obscurity of forests, or gazing steadfastly on the calm and pure waves. She shuns all invocation; but, without being called upon, it is she who, from the dark clouds which surround her, beams forth inspiration on the susceptible and unhappy! Her name is Melancholy! A thousand times she has strung the tuneful lyre of Petrarch. It is only for him to sing of Laura and of Vacluse, and Melancholy herself becomes sublimer as she listens. I pretend not to his renown, but I may

flatter myself that the muse, the friend of poets and of lovers, will not disdain to lend sweetness to my numbers and interest to my theme, when I sing of maternal love, of valour, and misfortune.

At the epoch when the pious monarch, Louis the Ninth, reigned with so much glory in France—the father of his people, an able legislator, an intrepid and magnanimous warrior, many princes, celebrated alike for their exploits and their magnificence, flourished in ancient Germany; and among others, Otho, Duke of Bavaria. The striking beauty of the young Princess Elizabeth, his daughter, at the early age of sixteen, drew to his court the most valiant and accomplished princes and knights in Europe, who all aspired to the honour of her hand. Among these most renowned characters, we must more particularly distinguish the warlike Conrad, son and

heir to Frederick II. Emperor of Germany, and the illustrious Henry, King of Arragon, and the most chivalric of sovereigns; who saw nothing in the elevation of a throne, but the advantage it afforded of commanding the admiration of multitudes for virtuous and heroic actions; who never employed sovereign authority, or force of arms, except in the behalf of weakness, and the protection of injured innocence.

The Duke of Bavaria fixed his choice of a son-in-law upon the Emperor Conrad, and the young princess agreed to it without opposition. The King of Arragon upon this quitted Otho's court, and the fortunate Conrad espoused Elizabeth. Love and happiness were no obstacles to this prince's continuance of the war, which his enmity to the Pope had instigated him to begin. He went into Italy to get himself acknowledged King of the



Two Sicilies ; he made himself master of Naples, Capua and Aquino ; and died in the midst of his victories, leaving a widow in the flower of youth, and an only son in its tenderest infancy. The queen was still in mourning for her husband, when the faithful Henry of Arragon presented himself at her court, once more to lay his vows and his crown at her feet. Elizabeth answered him calmly, but with that firmness which deprived him of all further hope. She told him that she had bestowed all her sensibility upon the infant Conradin, her son ; that she had vowed to consecrate her future life solely to him, and that she wished but to exist for his sake. The little prince was present at this discourse ; the generous Henry took him up in his arms, and pressing him to his heart—"At least," said he, "in spite of your cruelty, I shall not be a stranger to this sole object of your regard. I swear

by honour and love to attach myself to his destiny. In the midst of the factions and the enemies that surround you, it will doubtless be a stormy one. If he have need of a defender, call but on me, and I will leave every thing else to fly to his aid." At these words, so full of magnanimity, Elizabeth, inexpressibly affected, wept all the gratitude of the most affectionate of mothers. Henry renewed the oath he had just taken, and tearing himself away—"Adieu ! madam," he exclaimed in leaving her—"Adieu ! for ever; if you continue happy ; if not, adieu only till you may require my presence." He disappeared, and returned instantly to his own kingdom. A few years afterwards the queen, being compelled to abandon Naples, sought refuge in Sicily with her son, who was, at that time, ten years of age. She took along with her the young Frederick of Austria, and his sister, the amiable and

beautiful Lidania, who had then just entered on her ninth year. Frederick, who was Conradin's near relation, was twelve years old; and the queen was the guardian of both these orphan children, who were brought up with her son. Elizabeth delighted in strengthening that generous friendship between the young princes, which united them till death, and love assisted to rivet the bonds of their interesting union; for even before she knew that passion by name, Lidania had, at thirteen years of age, united her existence to that of Conradin: nevertheless, she imagined that she only loved him as the friend of her brother; and Conradin, whilst he adored Lidania, thought it perfectly natural, that, among all the beauties of his court, he should admire none but the sister of Frederick. This instinctive passion diffused an inexplicable charm over the intimacy of all parties.

The queen, who intended Lidania for Conradin, saw with pleasure the development and progress of their innocent attachment; and happy in her ignorance of the eventful future, she drained with them the light and fragile cup of the purest felicity which can be tasted upon earth. This youthful pair, in the most delicious climate, and under the brightest skies of Europe, enjoyed alike all the solid good and every brilliant illusion of life. Virtue, maternal tenderness, and filial duty, friendship, love, high rank, splendour, and greatness, united to the most amiable inclinations. Like those tender flowers which, in the first fine days of spring, hastily start forth from their embalmed cups, to offer their impatient hearts to the rays of the sun, under whose heat they wither and consume; fearlessly casting themselves upon the stormy future, they give themselves up to the devouring flame

of passion, to deceitful hopes, and fugitive joys. Conradin, however, the illustrious and last descendant of the ancient house of Swabia, a name so dear to Germany, was invited by the warlike inhabitants of these extensive regions to put himself at their head, in order to regain the inheritance of his ancestors. This proposal roused all the ardour of Conradin and his friend, but it gave great concern to Lidania, and still more to the queen ; for Lidania, after all, thought less of the dangers of the enterprise, than of the fame that might spring out of it. Love is ambitious, for vanity is always mingled with its feelings ; but when maternal tenderness dreads actual danger, she looks upon all worldly distinctions with philosophic disdain ; for her terrors shew her the emptiness of them more effectually than the finest lessons of human wisdom could teach it. The queen was forced, how-

ever, to yield to the impetuous ardour of the young princes, and to consent to their departure—though Conradin was scarcely yet sixteen.

The night before they set off, Elizabeth, hopeless of either sleep or composure, passed the night on a lofty terrace belonging to the palace, from one side of which might be seen the summit of far-famed *Ætna*, and from the other the ocean. The moon, which sheds so fine a light in the cloudless skies of this beautiful country when the weather is serene, shewed the queen the vast extent of waters which, at the first break of day, were to bear upon their bosom the vessel which was to contain her son and his attendants—all her hopes of earthly happiness. “Oh, my son!” she exclaimed, “thou reignest in this delicious isle over our obedient people, by whom thou art adored, and yet thou wilt estrange thyself from me, and expose thyself to the

most frightful dangers, in thy endeavour to obtain another crown. Thou pursuest the wild and colossal phantom which the blind multitude calls glory, and which is only to be obtained by the immolation of thousands of victims, and the shedding of rivers of blood. Ah ! does not the true glory of kings consist in being beloved by their subjects, and rendering them happy ? Dost thou not enjoy that glory here—and canst thou think, then, that thou art fulfilling thy duty in tearing thyself from my arms, and leaving me thus solitary, the prey to despair ? Me thou canst sacrifice, without remorse, at the fatal dictates of ambition. Alas ! thou art now in this palace, but to-morrow it will be a desert to me : at this moment thou art locked in calm repose, and thou wilt awake only to bid me farewell ! How often, whilst contemplating this beauteous shore, have I been wrapped in the most deli-

cious contemplations; I could wander into the blissful regions of the future—I could dispose of them as my maternal fondness prompted me, and see myself ever at thy side. But now I cannot bear even to look upon the fatal element, which is so soon to raise up so immense a barrier betwixt us.”

Elizabeth, as she said these words, turned, and directed her steps towards the other end of the terrace; Mount *Ætna* was exactly before her. Oh! who can explain the intricacies of a soul which is imbued with profound sensibility. Its own agitation gives a new aspect to the objects that surround it—an aspect which utterly destroys the indolent impressions of mere habit. The queen trembled as she cast her eyes upon the volcano, which, at that moment, presented a most majestic phenomenon. She gazed with terror upon the dark clouds of smoke, which, rising in spiral volumes, spread them-



selves over the azure of the heavenly vault, the highest point of which they seemed to reach. "Wonderous mountain," she exclaimed, "thou carriest desolation and death within thee ; thou dost only burst forth, and shine, to destroy, and to spread terror and destruction around thee. Oh ! threatening image, formidable and striking emblem of war, that yet more dreadful scourge." As she was saying these words, she started at beholding the dark cloud of smoke begin to redden at its base, and throw forth millions of flaming sparks : all at once rapid sheets of fire seemed to gather together, and formed an immense faggot of waving flames, which, rising up to the clouds, dispersed the smoke on each side of them, which opened and separated, as if to leave a free passage to this destructive element. The queen had never seen an eruption before, and the spectacle filled her with horror.

**“Merciful Creator !” she exclaimed,  
“ what a dismal omen.”**

With these words, ready to faint, she supported herself by the wall of the terrace, and was slowly returning to the palace, when her women, terrified at the noise of the eruption, ran out to meet her, and sustaining her in their arms, conducted her to her own apartment.

The eruption of Mount *Ætna* delayed the departure of the young princes for some days, as they were unwilling to leave the queen a prey to terror of so new a species. The volcano, however, ceased to vomit forth its flames, and they were under the necessity of setting off. Painful and melancholy were the adieus, but the princes, and even *Lidania* herself, were sustained by joyful hopes and anticipation of victory. At the moment of taking leave, *Conradin* was profoundly affected at receiving

the various remembrances of affection and maternal love. Lidania presented him with a magnificent scarf, embroidered by her own hands, and the queen gave him a solid suit of armour, which had been made by her own immediate directions; at the same time, putting a ring upon his finger, with her name engraven upon it.

The young princes could not embark until the evening, and the queen then went with them to the edge of the water. There she received the last embraces of her son. Silent, chilled and motionless, she could not weep; a mortal terror seemed to restrain her tears. Leaning on the arm of Lidania, her eyes fixed upon the vessel which contained all her future hopes of happiness, she shudderingly gazed upon the line of light which the keel had traced on the waves, already blackening in the obscurity of the evening. So the terrified traveller, wandering

amidst the shades of night, beneath a dark and stormy sky, sees with horror the angry lightning diffuse its fire, and dart through the heavy clouds. At last the queen summoned resolution to tear herself from the trying scene. She lifted her eyes to Heaven, to implore its blessing on her son: at that moment the clouds towards the edge of the horizon dispersed, and the moon appeared; but Elizabeth started, for its disk was dark, and the colour of blood.

Superstition is the daughter of fear; perhaps of that fear to which maternal love gives birth. Elizabeth, quite overcome, fell upon the throbbing bosom of Lidania, who led her away from the shore.

Elizabeth was not unmindful of the promise she had formerly given to the generous Henry, king of Arragon. It was now, in fact, her greatest source of consolation; she, therefore, lost no

time in sending messengers to inform him of the situation of her son. Henry immediately went to Rome, where he expected Conradin would take up his first quarters ; he assembled all his partizans around him, and in order to serve Conradin the more effectually, he took his place among the senators, and when the young prince arrived he conducted him in triumph to the Capitol, and caused him to be solemnly crowned Emperor of Germany.

Having tasted all the real pleasures of greatness, Conradin delivered himself up, at Rome, to the seductive charms of its illusions. He was received with the transports which will always be excited, in times of trouble, by the chief of a party, who may join to an illustrious name, the graces of youth, and the frankness and easy confidence of inexperience ; and it must be confessed, that this enthusiasm, short-lived as it always is, in the mul-

titude, and the flattery of his own party, touched him more sensibly than all the attachment of the Sicilians, and their innumerable proofs of faithful and stedfast friendship.

The magnanimity and zeal of the king of Arragon soon enabled him to raise a fine and flourishing army. Conradin and Frederick elated with youth, courage, and hope, placed themselves at the head of the troops under the direction of Henry, and began their march towards the kingdom of Naples. This beautiful part of Italy was governed by the usurper, Charles of Anjou; brother to the greatest monarch in Europe; and son of a queen, as pure and virtuous as she was justly celebrated for her skill in the art of reigning. Charles of Anjou, notwithstanding his brilliant conquests and military talents, was unworthy both of his noble birth, and of the throne which he had made himself master of.

Usurpation naturally produces tyranny. It always appears to the usurper, that that which he could only gain by force he can preserve only by despotic authority. There can be nothing paternal in the heart of an illegitimate monarch, nor can there be a more melancholy presage of a reign, than the commencing of it with acts of violence and injustice. Charles joined natural ferocity to the pride of a conqueror. He was coldly cruel ; not that he had any pleasure in shedding blood when it was of no use to him ; but he was lavish of it whenever he thought that his interests required it. He ranked murder among the means and political resources which he was proud of boasting himself able to employ adroitly. Insensible to all generous impressions, barbarity was, in his eyes, only part of a necessary system, and revenge nothing more than a right, which the strong both might and ought to make

use of, without scruple or remorse. This prince was eminently successful in his undertakings, but all his exploits were tarnished by his vices. A warrior without any solid fame, a king without any real power, he lived detested ; and his cruelties produced, towards the end of his odious reign, that most horrible and bloody of all massacres, the Sicilian Vespers.\*

After innumerable marches and counter-marches, which served no other end than that of wearying his troops, the army of Conradin finally fell in with that of Charles of Anjou, commanded by himself, at a place called the *Field of Lilies*, upon the borders of the lake Fucin. A memorable battle immediately took place.

\* In which eight thousand French were put to the sword at Palermo. The conspirators had agreed that the first toll of the bell for vespers should be the signal for their attack. Hence the name of this appalling transaction.



Fame, experience and superiority of numbers, were all in favor of Charles ; nevertheless victory long remained dubious and uncertain, and even as if she would gladly have inclined to the right side. The king of Arragon and the young princes performed prodigies of valour ; but suddenly Conradin, carried away by his ardour and temerity, imprudently threw himself into the midst of a battalion of the enemy which he saw was in confusion, Frederick followed him, and instantly the party rallied, and surrounded them. The king of Arragon abandoned the victorious wing, which he was commanding, in order to fly to their assistance, but at the moment that he got up to them, he received a thrust from a lance, and fell to the earth, senseless and bathed in blood. During this time the young princes, sword in hand, cut their way through the enemy, and night coming on, they

profited by a moment of general confusion and obscurity, to make their escape. At the end of an hour's march, they took shelter in a cottage. It was not the first time that they had entered so humble a habitation, but hitherto their visits had been those of benefactors ; now they were to appear as suppliants in this lowly abode. Instead of the compassion with which the sight of poverty had always before inspired them, they now envied the lot of the obscure labourer, who was sheltered by the lowliness of his condition, from the shafts of malignant fortune ; and who, if forced to fly, had only his thatched roof to regret ; carrying along with him, all the real wealth of a rational being, innocence, frugality, courage, and habits of labour. Changes are sometimes necessary to the great ones of the earth, in order that they may learn the insufficiency of power, and the emptiness of all enjoy-

ments of mere pomp and vanity. Whilst they are abandoned and persecuted, they feel more sensibly than any persons, these eternal truths ; but too commonly they forget them again, as soon as they are enabled to extricate themselves from these trying situations. To be obliged from motives of personal interest, to study ourselves impartially, is the sure way to make just reflections, and lay down solid principles of morality. Wisdom is only to be acquired by the calm and disinterested meditations of a penetrating observer : it is rarely the fruit of experience alone. The young princes, during the hours they spent in this cottage, deprecated with sincerity enough, the intoxication of greatness ; but if it had just then been announced to them that their troops had come off victorious, they would have caught up their arms again, with all the eagerness of the most untamed ambition. Before break

of day they prepared to set off once more, and having equipped themselves in the garb of peasants, they wandered, as chance directed them, through the fields and woods. The tumult of the battle was no longer heard, all around was calm; nature seemed to have given herself up to repose, but hatred was still awake: the illustrious fugitives were pursued; at break of day they were overtaken, recognized, and being made prisoners, were conducted to Naples, where they were given up to their implacable enemy, who had them immediately put into close confinement, within the bounds of a narrow prison. In this melancholy situation Conradin's first anxiety was to gain some intelligence concerning the fate of Henry. He was informed that his soldiers had carried him off the field in a dying state, and that it was most probable he had expired in the act of removal. Conradin shed bitter tears

over the fate of this generous prince ; and could he do otherwise than weep again, when he thought of his mother and Lidania, and figured to himself the grief that they would feel at hearing of his defeat and captivity ? Nevertheless, he was far from imagining that his life was in danger ; he was soon, however, roused from this illusion. Charles called a secret council, which he took care should be composed of those among his courtiers, who were the most lax in their principles, and the most devoted to his arbitrary wishes. Under pretence of securing the tranquillity of the state, they did not hesitate to violate the most sacred regulations of war, the rights of the people and of sovereigns, and all the laws of religion and humanity : the death of the two princes was agreed upon by this shadow of a tribunal, as barbarous as it was illegal. O, away for ever, among civilized nations this false

false and execrable policy, which at once hypocritical, sanguinary, and senseless, insolently and obstinately rejects every generous suggestion; arrogating to itself the infernal right of authorising murder, and commanding assassinations; of putting a price upon heads, of purchasing with blood spilt by treachery; and who, in short, devoid of the sanction of the law, though under the assumed name of the *public good*, raises up scaffolds solely at the instigation of guilty fear, hatred, and revenge!

The young princes, as yet ignorant of the frightful decree which was hanging over their heads, walked together every day upon a high terrace, which commanded a view of the sea. One day a soldier, who was on guard upon the terrace, slipped a note into Conradin's hand as he passed him: the two princes, impatient to read it, returned

to their apartment, and found its contents as follow :—

“ You are lost without speedy flight !  
I will run all risks in order to serve  
you. I have gained two centinels over  
to your cause ; they will introduce me  
this night into your prison. I have  
prepared every thing to enable you to  
get off unperceived. You will find a  
person to guide you to the sea shore,  
and a vessel which will take you to  
Sicily.

“ PHILIP.”

The princes instantly guessed that this note came from Charles Philip, the eldest son of Charles of Anjou ; they knew that this young prince had publicly expressed a lively interest for them, and that he possessed a noble disposition, and was universally beloved. Conradin and Frederick, full

of gratitude, anxiety and agitation, could not lie down, but passed most of the night in silent watching. About an hour before day-break they heard a noise, and they guessed it to be their deliverer. Soon they felt assured of it: they hear footsteps—they draw nearer—some one touches the door—it is unbarred and opened. At that moment they made themselves certain of seeing their deliverer: they flew to meet him with a feeling of joy, which was, alas! the last they were ever to experience. In place of Prince Philip, they beheld a venerable ecclesiastic, who advanced slowly towards them, with consternation in his visage. They stood transfixed. The priest, after a mournful and ominous preamble, informed them, that the plot formed in their behalf by Prince Philip had been discovered, and that the prince himself was put into close confinement, in order to prevent him from opposing



any obstacle to the execution of the fatal sentence; which condemned them to death. The princes listened to this information with the indignation which such flagrant wickedness could not but inspire, though they likewise bore it with a firmness that shewed them capable of submitting with fortitude to death itself. The priest, pressed by their questions, could not refrain from tears, as he told them that they had only eight-and-forty hours, to prepare themselves for the awful catastrophe: all this time he passed with them. They learned the next day, that Prince Philip, bent on undertaking every thing to save them, had endeavoured to escape by one of the windows; in order to come to their aid, but that the cord, by which he had endeavoured to descend, breaking, he had fractured his leg in his fall; that he was not, however, considered in danger from the accident; but that

he was in the keenest affliction at being unable to prevent the cruelty which he, from his soul, abhorred.

During the last night, which remained to these unfortunate princes, they waited for the fatal moment with the utmost calmness and presence of mind. They listened to the exhortations of the venerable priest; and Frederick wrote to his sister, and Conradin to his mother, and to Prince Philip; thanking him in the most affectionate language, and imploring him to convey to his mother his last farewell, and the cherished ring which he had received from her. He related, in his letter to the queen, all that Philip had done to serve him, and manifested the tenderest gratitude towards him. He finished thus: "Adieu! best of mothers! at the moment of entering upon eternity, I cannot regret this transient life, at best only an exile, and a passage; but

“ I weep for you, and for her who will  
“ mourn my fate. About to appear  
“ before the supreme Judge who leaves  
“ no crime unpunished, I indulge in  
“ no resentment against the tyrant be-  
“ neath whose oppression I fall: when  
“ I think of him, it is only with hor-  
“ ror, in reflecting upon the punish-  
“ ment which eternal justice has in  
“ store for his crimes. Adieu, then !  
“ live for the sake of Lidania ! and,  
“ oh ! may she supply my place to  
“ you by her tender attentions ! Let  
“ us bear in mind that our souls will  
“ be re-united in those immortal  
“ abodes, where love, as pure as it is  
“ immutable, is for ever freed from  
“ anxiety and sorrow. Alas ! but for  
“ the ambition that took me from your  
“ arms, I might have found my heaven  
“ upon earth ! O happy plains of Si-  
“ cily ! how was it that I could gain  
“ the resolution to leave ye ! O my dear  
“ mother, I have consigned thee, who

“ valuedst existence only for my sake,  
“ a prey to eternal regrets; and never  
“ again shall I see her who plighted  
“ her early faith to me. Scarcely yet  
“ emerged from childhood, she will  
“ flourish in youth, and attain the per-  
“ fection of her beauty, whilst I am  
“ consuming in the grave! The faithful  
“ friend, too, who has scarcely quitted  
“ me for a moment; that friend so  
“ beloved, I lead him to the scaffold!  
“ Alas! I shall have lived only to  
“ cause the misery of all whom I most  
“ love. Dreadful fate! O my dear  
“ mother, I implore, on my knees, a  
“ full and generous pardon from you  
“ and my Lidania. Adieu! . . . best  
“ and fondest of mothers! My last  
“ thought shall be on you!”

The priest, in whose bosom these young and ill-fated princes deposited their dying wishes, took upon himself the charge of delivering the letters to Prince Philip, along with the ring of

Conradin. Religion and humanity guaranteed the performance of his promise, which no earthly consideration would have induced him to violate. A little before the break of that day, which was to be their last, Conradin and Frederick, leaning against one of the windows, contemplated with profound emotion, the immensity of the heavens. "We are drawing near to our real country," said Conradin, "we are about to finish a dangerous voyage. I am but sixteen years of age, and have only seen the happiest part of my human career. I shall receive the crown of immortality, without having had to struggle for it against the seductions of flattery and vice! . . . Ah! Frederick!" he continued, "it is true, our existence is terminated by tempest; but we are, at least, spared the storm of evil passions." Saying these words, he cast his eyes up to heaven. He started,

he saw the sun rise upon him for the last time—in a few moments its radiant light would be, to him, for ever quenched. He saw all nature gradually steal forth from the shades of night, and gain once more, colour, brilliancy, life, and motion ! He heard the birds again pour out their early song, and the tender ditties of the young shepherds were wafted to him from the mountain-tops, mingled with the perfume of the opening flowers. The wide ocean spread itself before him, and displayed a vessel which, with full-set sails, balanced herself majestically upon its waves. Alas ! she might be bound for Sicily ! The unfortunate Conradin could not help gazing with admiration on the scene, even whilst he was waiting the signal for his own destruction, and that signal so near at hand ! To him the future consisted only of a few minutes, and afforded the prospect of only one ter-

rible, inevitable event—that of death upon the scaffold !

Suddenly, a loud noise of horses, and equipages entering the outer courts of the prison, made all its dismal vaults resound. The princes shuddered—they knew that it was themselves who were sought after. No heroism can annihilate the feelings of nature ; but it can do more, it can subjugate them. The young men threw themselves into each other's arms ! “ O my friend !” cried Conradin, “ we see now where  
“ all the ideas of glory, which so much  
“ intoxicated us, are about to end !”  
“ Ah !” replied Frederick, thy mis-  
“ fortunes, thy wrongs, thy courage,  
“ will, for ever, attach glory to thy  
“ name, and I shall gain it likewise,  
“ by dying with thee ! . . . .” At these words, they fervently embraced each other for an instant ; then turning to the priest who remained constantly with them, they implored his benedic-

tion, and received it with the profoundest respect and veneration. Just then, the officers of the royal guard entered, with a severe and solemn aspect, and each of them wearing a scarf of black crape round his arm. "We are ready," said Conradin, firmly; and he and Frederick advancing before the officers, left the room with unflinching steps. They were taken, in a mourning coach, to the church of the Carmelites, in the market-place of Naples. Charles of Anjou, like all despots, entertaining a thorough contempt for the intellect of the people, thought it easy to sanctify the most sanguinary deeds in the eyes of the multitude, by glossing them over with the appearance of religion, and, joining an impious and absurd profanation to his cruelty, he made these victims assist at their funeral ceremonies; thus, not content with putting them to death, he contrived a new species of torture



for them:—before he deprived them of life, he caused them to enter, still breathing, into the tomb; and the people saw with heart-rending pity, mingled with terror, these unfortunate princes, in all the pride and flower of their age, placed under a funeral pall, and listening with holy fortitude to the “office for the repose of the souls of the departed.” After this mournful ceremony was over, the doors of the church were thrown open, and they were conducted to the place of execution, already filled by immense crowds, who, falling back to let them pass, discovered to their eyes the scaffold which awaited them. At the sight of this object, Conradin, who was holding his friend by the hand, let it fall, in order to step before him; and quickening his steps, he advanced intrepidly towards the scaffold. The effort cost him nothing—a thousand eyes were fixed on him. This species of heroism can

do any thing in the presence of witnesses. The unfortunate Conradin received, as he went along, the tenderest marks of compassion and admiration ; sufficiently expressed by universal tears and groans, suppressed, even as they were, under the influence of fear. He was offered assistance in mounting the scaffold : “ No,” said he, “ I require “ no help : the place to which these “ steps conduct me, is more desirable “ to innocence and virtue than the “ throne of an usurper.” As soon as he reached the scaffold, he was immediately joined by Frederick, who threw himself into his arms. Conradin pressed him to his heart, saying : “ Let “ us bear in mind that this, though our “ last embrace, is no adieu ; since our “ souls are on the point of being “ eternally united.” At these words, throwing himself on his knees, and raising his hands towards heaven, he cried, “ Oh my mother ! O my God !”

These were his last words. The instrument of death, suspended over his head, at that instant fell, and sent it to the feet of his unfortunate friend, who, bathed in tears, lifted it up in an agony of emotion, and pressed it, bleeding as it was, to his bosom :—then drawing off his glove, and throwing it amidst the multitude, he called out with a loud voice : “ *Glory and happiness to him who shall revenge Conradin !*” He then received the mortal stroke which joined him again to his friend.

From amidst the multitude of spectators, who beheld this lamentable spectacle, a Ghibelline had the courage to stand forth and take up the glove which Frederic had thrown down, and losing himself immediately in the crowd, he escaped with it, quitted Naples, and carried it, covered with the blood of Conradin, to the king of Naples. This monarch had not died of his wounds, but his life had been despaired of for

many days. He was at length pronounced out of danger ; though yet too weak to take the field, or even mount his horse. He made a solemn vow, nevertheless, to revenge the death of the unfortunate Conradin, and immediately gave orders to assemble the troops for the formation of a new army, which he meant to command, and conduct himself against the barbarous Charles of Anjou.

Immediately after the loss of the battle of the Field of Lilies, a small vessel was dispatched from Naples to Sicily, with the melancholy tidings. The queen incapable of imagining the existence of wickedness like that of Charles of Anjou, consoled herself by the consideration that Conradin however lived, and lived unhurt. She thought only of going herself to his deliverance ; and embarking, with sufficient treasure for his ransom, on board a vessel, she committed herself

without further delay to the care of the winds which were to waft her to Naples. The voyage was safe and speedy : when she saw the beautiful port of Naples, her joy was equal to her maternal tenderness. “ I shall see him then once more ;” she cried, “ I shall soon hear “ his voice again ; embrace him ! carry “ him back with me to Sicily.” She arrives in the harbour, she lands, she is met : alas ! she hears the dreadful catastrophe—Conradin had breathed his last two days before ; overwhelmed with grief, she sunk into the arms of her attendants.

Before she left the shore, so fatal to her happiness, the unfortunate queen bestowed all the money she had brought with her, to the convent of the order of Carmelites, for the founding of a perpetual funeral service for the two ill-fated princes. After the fulfilment of this pious duty, the queen, despairing, weak, and helpless, deprived for ever

of hope and consolation, hastily quitted the abhorred shore, and reimbarked for Italy.

Elizabeth, still inconsolable, had been two months at Palermo, when she was informed, by a message from the king of Arragon, that this prince, at the head of a powerful army, was about once more to tempt fate and danger, in order to revenge the death of Conradin. "Alas !" she exclaimed "can rivers of blood wash away my grief ; can vengeance restore my son to my arms.?"

The king of Arragon, nevertheless, advanced by rapid strides towards Naples. Charles of Anjou, without loss of time, assembled his troops to meet him ; and Prince Philip, who had completely regained his strength, was entrusted with a considerable command. This prince, adored by a father, whose only son he was, had exposed his life in the hopes of saving an enemy whom he considered to be inhumanly

oppressed, and he now shewed the same eagerness to defend his father and his kingdom from the attacks of a powerful adversary. The battle took place a little way from Naples. Upon the shield of Henry was engraved, "the revenger of Conradin." From the very commencement of the action, he perceived Charles of Anjou, and directing his course towards him, he waved his shield before his eyes, and exclaimed: "Tremble usurper! murderer, tremble! Heaven itself fights for us. Not even thy courage can stand against remorse." At these words Charles turned pale: a stroke from Henry's lance reached him; he staggered. Philip flew to his aid; a general engagement took place, and the battle raged with fury. Charles feels his wound begin to open; the blood flows from it; his reason wanders, he imagines he sees the ghost of Conradin among the ranks; it follows him; he starts back in

horror ; for the first time in his life he meditates flight ; and, at the very moment when victory seemed to incline towards his troops, they were seized with universal panic. Philip performed prodigies of valour in the hope of rallying them, but in vain. Charles carried three-fourths of his army with him, in his retreat : he escaped, and they dispersed. Philip, unshaken as he was, could not, when left entirely to himself, resist the victorious strength of the king of Arragon, who, by the infinite justice of Providence, was thus enabled to gain a complete victory over the murderer of Conradin, and to carry off his only son as a prisoner. Henry, followed by his triumphant army, immediately went with Philip to the sea-shore, and sent him, under a strong escort, on board of a vessel which had orders to sail for Sicily, and there to deliver the son of Charles of Anjou



up to the Queen, who was to consider herself the sole mistress of his fate.

Philip, on his arrival at Palermo, was conducted into one of the apartments of the palace, and the same escort, that had brought him, was placed over him for his guard. He expected every severity that grief and revenge could suggest. He had not sent the letters and ring of Conradin to the queen, because he had not found any opportunity that he had deemed sufficiently safe ; but he carried the sacred pledges about with him, though his pride was such as to prevent his bringing them forward in the moment of such extreme danger. “ No,” said he, “ that would be to throw myself upon the gratitude of the queen ; besides, my zeal has been fruitless, and may not this unhappy mother, doubtless thirsting for revenge, persuade herself that I have merely affected an anxiety to save her unfortunate son,

“ merely to escape the dishonour of  
“ participating in the cruelty which  
“ cost him his life; or even as a stroke  
“ of policy, to secure myself a return  
“ of compassion in case of any future  
“ emergency. No; if she be deter-  
“ mined to cut short the thread of my  
“ existence, she shall not receive the  
“ letters and the ring, till I am no  
“ more.”

Firm in his resolution, Philip sent no message to the queen, but waited in silence the fate which might be reserved for him. Elizabeth, aware that she could not see a young man so near the age of Conradin, and the son of his barbarous enemy, without the most painful feelings, could not send for him into her presence till after five or six days had expired. Philip was not less agitated at the thought of seeing one so justly incensed against him, and prepared himself for the keenest reproaches and imprecations against

Charles of Anjou. The officer of the guard conducted him into the closet of Elizabeth, who was there with only the weeping Lidania.—Philip's gait had a slight imperfection in it, in consequence of his having broken his leg in his attempt to go to the assistance of Conradin, but his figure was still the most majestic, and his countenance the most interesting possible. How powerfully would his lameness have affected the queen, had she known that he had incurred it for the sake of her son ! Philip advanced slowly, and bowed before the queen, without uttering a single word. The queen turned of a death-like paleness, and Lidania covered her face with her hands ; a moment of profound silence followed. At last, Elizabeth turning her eyes, bathed in tears, upon Philip, said, in a voice choaked with sobs, " Prince, you are free ; no ransom is " required for your liberty—tell him

“ who has rendered me the most  
“ forlorn and wretched of mothers,  
“ that it is thus a christian queen re-  
“ venges herself !” At these unexpected and magnanimous words, Philip drew nearer to the queen, and kneeling presented to her the letter and ring of Conradin ; then rising, and turning to Lidania, he gave her the letter from her brother. Elizabeth, drowned in tears, read the letter so dear, although so mournful, which she never afterwards passed a day of her life without reading again. Lidania scarcely gave herself time to peruse hers, when, by a sudden movement of the most lively gratitude, she threw herself on her knees before Philip, her mind filled with the idea of his exertions in Conradin’s behalf. At that moment the queen, no longer able to struggle against her feelings, sunk into the arms of Philip, and faintly exclaiming,

“ Oh, beloved and gracious prince !”  
she fainted upon his bosom ! . . . .

Arnaud de Castelnaudari here ceased, and all his auditors took that opportunity to compliment him on his performance ; an ancient custom in literary societies, which is not entirely laid aside in our own time. Besides James Colonna and Petrarch, this assembly, small as it was, could boast of two excellent judges of literature : the name of one was Lewis, of the other Lello ; they both cultivated letters, and wrote poetry, and had been many years attached to the Bishop of Lombez. Petrarch formed an intimacy with them, and their friendship lasted all the remainder of their lives. All gave to Lewis the name of Socrates, and to Lello that of Lelius ; distinctions which they always retained in this society, as amiable as it is brilliant and refined.— A few days after the recital of Arnaud

de Castelnaudari, Petrarch received a long letter from Isoarda, pressing him to return to Avignon, as Ermensenda had come back again with Laura, who had been to a grand ball which the city had given to an illustrious traveller, Prince Charles of Luxembourg. Isoarda added, that, at this entertainment, the Prince, hearing the name of Laura, entreated her permission to kiss the beauteous eyes to which Petrarch's verses had given so much celebrity. Petrarch, however, was less flattered with the compliment thus paid by the Prince, to his three famous canzonets, than he was jealous of the favour which he had, through their means, obtained. Nevertheless, he resolved to set off without delay, and communicating his intention to the Bishop and his friends, he quitted Toulouse the next morning at break of day. As soon as he reached Avignon, his brother Gerard, whom he had left there, informed him of the

news, which, at that moment, occupied every one's attention, of the memorable victory which Etienne Colonna had just gained at Rome over the party of the Ursini. This event Petrarch made the subject of one of his finest odes, which he addressed to its hero, Etienne Colonna. .

The same evening that he returned to Avignon, Petrarch saw Isoarda, who informed him that Laura was going to walk, the next day, in the gardens of an old gentleman, a friend of his, whose name was d'Elbene. Petrarch did not fail to avail himself of this opportunity of seeing her. He found his old friend walking in his garden, and agreeable as usual ; but he listened to his conversation, notwithstanding, with extreme impatience. Could it be otherwise, when he expected every instant to behold Laura once more ! At last, she made her appearance, with her two most cherished companions, Isoarda

and Cecilia, the Countess de Turenne. These two young ladies were equally desirous of favouring Petrarch's wishes ; they, therefore, contrived to engross the attention of the old gentleman, and under pretence of examining his garden more minutely, they took him far away from the lovers, of whom they soon lost sight. What an epoch in existence ! What an eternal subject of remembrance is the moment in which we are, for the first time, left alone with a beloved object ! Laura was leaning upon Petrarch's arm, and with the instinctive artifice of her sex on such occasions, she immediately began to speak of indifferent subjects, in the hope of hiding her agitation. " This scene is familiar to you ?" said she, in a trembling voice. " Ah !" cried Petrarch, " I seem to see it, at this moment, for the first time, and it is so ; every object is changed ; and how delicious is the metamorphosis ! how



“ delightful are these groves, which,  
“ forming a happy boundary around  
“ us, encloses me in this narrow space  
“ with you alone to gaze on. I have  
“ celebrated the superb oaks of the  
“ forest of Ardenne ; but I shall be a  
“ thousand times more inspired when  
“ I sing of the beautiful trees, the  
“ guardians of the purest love, whose  
“ gently agitated branches wave over  
“ your head, to freshen the air that you  
“ breathe, and to screen you from the  
“ ardour of the sun. These leaves  
“ seem to crowd together solely to  
“ hide us from prying jealous eyes—  
“ who indeed could witness the excess  
“ of my happiness, without envy ? It  
“ is no longer noisy fame that brings  
“ you my vows ; I breathe them to  
“ you myself. Laura is at my side ;  
“ she hears, she listens to me. Those  
“ eyes, whose power I have made all  
“ the beauties in Europe covet, those  
“ celestial eyes are fixed upon me !”

“ Ah, Petrarch !” replied Laura,  
“ your brilliant imagination runs away  
“ with your feelings—can your heart  
“ be really as glowing, as tender as  
“ your poetry ? I am proud of your  
“ fame, and yet I am jealous of it ; it  
“ it gives so much publicity to your  
“ love, that perhaps that appears suffi-  
“ cient reward to you for it.” “ What !”  
exclaimed Petrarch, “ O heavens ! ta-  
“ lent is the offspring of the soul ; to  
“ you I am indebted for the whole of  
“ mine—my success is the consequence  
“ of my love ; and the fame of which  
“ you speak, only gratifies me as it has  
“ you for its object, as it may give  
“ pleasure to you whom I am indebted  
“ to, for it ; but if it be your wish that  
“ the lays which you inspire should be  
“ known to you alone, joyfully shall I  
“ consent.” “ No,” interrupted Laura,  
“ I could not keep the secret. The  
“ distinction with which you are every  
“ where treated, may sometimes make

“ me uneasy, but, nevertheless, I always  
“ feel exalted by it.” At these words  
Petrarch fell at her feet, and vowed  
eternal fidelity to her. Laura was  
powerfully affected ; and, at that mo-  
ment, making amends to herself for the  
silence she had hitherto imposed upon  
her feelings, she poured them out in  
the most expressive language ; that  
her tenderness could suggest ; and  
spoke with the more confidence, as  
she felt assured, whilst she was speak-  
ing, of being able to obtain her  
mother’s sanction to her attach-  
ment. The voice of Isoarda roused  
them from their delightful converse.  
Petrarch rose, and was turning round,  
when, with a sudden start, he exclaimed,  
“ Is this a laurel that I see ; never be-  
“ fore did I know that one grew on  
“ this spot ! it is a miracle wrought  
“ by Love himself ! the sacred shrub  
“ has sprung up to be at once the wit-  
“ ness and the pledge of our mutual

“vows!”—“Yes,” said Laura, smiling, “and to become the theme of the most delightful poetry ; but,” continued she, “let us rejoin our friends.” “Enchanting grove,” exclaimed Petrarch, “every day I will visit your shades to intoxicate myself with the most ineffable remembrances ; here I shall retrace the footsteps of Laura ; can I ever tread in them without the most exquisite sensations ; invisible to every other eye, she will here appear before me in all her charms.” Whilst he was speaking, he perceived Laura’s companions advancing, with his friend, who held two roses in his hand. “We have brought you the two loveliest flowers in the garden,” said Isoarda. “Yes,” said the old man, stopping for a moment to contemplate Laura and Petrarch, whose animation, graces and beauty forcibly arrested his notice, “there can be no thing in existence more beautiful !

“ never, surely, was there a more happy  
“ union.” Laura cast down her eyes  
at these words. “ Why that blush ?”  
said the old man, laughing, “ I was  
“ speaking of these two roses, which I  
“ beg you to accept.” Laura received  
them, and placed them in her bosom.  
“ Happy flowers,” cried Petrarch,  
“ in spite of their fragility they shall  
“ not perish ; their destiny ought to  
“ insure them immortality.” And so  
it did, for he perpetuated their me-  
mory in one of his sonnets.

The next day, Petrarch received a  
visit, which filled him with joy : it was  
from the celebrated painter, Simon Mar-  
tini, the pupil of Giotto ; a lover of all  
the fine arts, and a passionate admirer  
of Petrarch’s poetry. He was on his  
travels, and had come, considerably out  
of his way, to Avignon, in the hope of  
seeing the celebrated poet, whose works  
had afforded him so much pleasure.  
It was agreed upon, at their very first

interview, that Simon should take the portrait of Laura, though without asking her to sit. He engaged to paint her, as it were, by chance ; unknown to herself ; and merely from meeting her in company, and in the public walks. Petrarch made him promise, above all, to endeavour to catch the sweet expression of her countenance, and the animation which shone in her eyes. " And then," added he, " you will be " Prometheus, stealing fire from heaven." Simon Martini succeeded in making a perfect likeness, and a charming picture ; and Petrarch addressed two pieces of poetry to him, with which he was so delighted, that, in the transports of his gratitude, he painted all the characters of the Eneid on the margins of a manuscript which was in the possession of Petrarch.\*

\* This precious manuscript, along with the commentaries of Servius, has fallen to the possession of the celebrated Ambrosian Library.

The enamoured pair continued to meet repeatedly in the gardens of Petrarch's venerable friend, and always saw each other with the same delight ; but one day Isoarda came all alone. Petrarch instantly felt uneasy, and hastily questioning her, he learned that Laura had suddenly set out with her mother to Montpellier, to pass the winter there. " What!" cried Petrarch, " without telling me of it." " You need not make yourself unhappy about it," replied Isoarda. " Laura is not carried away, this time, to avoid the danger of beholding you. Ermes-senda knows her sentiments, and no longer opposes them ; it is, indeed, easy to see that she means to give her consent ; but for all that, it is certain that she has family business which calls her to Montpellier ; therefore you need be under no alarm about the journey." " Ah" said Petrarch, " she is gone, she is already far from me,

“and I cannot but fear.” During the remainder of their conversation, Isoarda made many useless efforts to console Petrarch ; but he was unable to shake off his sorrowful presentiments, and he had soon new subjects of vexation to add to his chagrin. He had a number of enthusiastic admirers, but he had also several vindictive enemies. Fame is indeed like the sun, which, whilst it calls forth and gives splendor to every thing that is beautiful, at the same time hatches a thousand venomous reptiles ; nevertheless, talents make fewer enemies, than difference of opinions. The envy that is excited, by merit, is often tempered by the flattering suggestions of self-love. The envious man may deceive himself respecting his own mind, and find some consolation in the idea which he may entertain of himself ; but we cannot be mistaken with respect to principles, and in general we despise or hate



all those who profess any in opposition to our own ; particularly if we desire to free ourselves from inconvenient restraints, or have the ambition to wish to establish new doctrines. Such persons were the bitterest enemies of Petrarch. He had combated with all the strength of his reason, and all the power of his genius, the infamous doctrines of Averroes, which had made a frightful progress in Italy, especially in Venice. An object of irreconcilable hatred to all the numerous partisans of these monstrous heresies, Petrarch, in his correspondence with Boccaccio, wrote to him, at that time, these memorable words, in speaking of the disciples of Averroes.

“ Void of science, yet full of presumption, they diffuse their empoisoned doctrines around, and despise every thing that is ancient.”

The Venetians, the most violent admirers of Averroes, were quite enraged

at the energetic criticism of Petrarch, and imagined, in the delirium of their wrath, that they could easily, by the mere force of their hatred, notwithstanding the suffrages of all the rest of Europe, annihilate the literary renown of him, whose reasoning they were yet unable to refute. Accordingly, they called a convocation, in order to judge him *academically*, and declared unanimously, that Petrarch was a *narrow minded and illiterate person*.

Such was the sentence pronounced by party spirit, upon the first scholar and poet of his age.

This animosity, however, extravagant and ridiculous as it was, affected Petrarch very sensibly; indeed, since the departure of Laura, his feelings had acquired an almost morbid acuteness; and he seemed to delight in dwelling upon every thing that could nourish his melancholy humour. He was perpetually recalling to mind the misfor

tunes and proscriptions of his family, and the loss of his fortune ; and worked himself into the most lively sense of the injustice which had banished him from his country, and still forbade his return to Florence. Too susceptible and generous not to love the place of his birth ; he mourned over the unfortunate exiles from it, and gave himself up to the most vehement indignation against the princes and factions whose ambition tyrannized over and ravaged such a beautiful country, formerly so famous for its arts, its national character and its liberty.

Under this fit of chagrin and misanthropy, Petrarch formed the resolution of retiring, with his brother, to Vaucluse ; there to wait until Laura's return. In order the more surely to immortalize this picturesque spot, he had bought a cottage there, and laid out two gardens near it ; one, a little distant from the fountain, contained only fruit

trees and vegetables ; the other was in a more elevated situation, and enclosed within its boundaries, a rock covered with moss, on which he traced the name of Laura, and encircled it with roses, violets and laurels. This last garden he called his Parnassus. On entering this rural and romantic habitation, Petrarch said to his brother : " Here is no  
" tyrant to menace or oppress us ; no  
" insolent citizen to bluster at us : no  
" lying tongue to defame us ! "

In this place he shut himself up, with his brother, a valet, an aged female servant, and a dog ; and lived with all the frugality of an anchorite.

After passing two months at Vaucluse, Petrarch, by way of diverting his mind from his vexations, resolved to take a journey with his brother, and to go to see the famous Mount Ventoux, one of the highest mountains in Europe, and of which the summit was, at that time, almost inaccessible. Arrived at

the foot of this formidable height, the terror and astonishment of the hardiest travellers, the two brothers met with an old shepherd, who told them that, during the sixty years that he had kept sheep in the vale, no one had had the temerity to scale the mountain's top. "So much the better," replied Petrarch; "we shall gain the more credit by doing it." So saying, in spite of every representation the old man could make, he began his perilous adventure, and his brother Gerard followed him.

They required all the vigour of their youth, and all the steadfastness of their resolution, to triumph over the obstacles which they met with at every step, and to resist a fatigue which every moment served to increase. They found neither road nor path: sometimes they were stopped by the stumps of trees and bushes, which, entirely filling up the way, obliged them continually to traverse their steps; often not merely

not advancing, but forced to retreat: sometimes they were entangled in long grass and prickly furze, from which they could only disengage themselves by the most wearisome efforts, and tearing their clothes in tatters: sometimes they were obliged to climb rocks, which, when they were at the top of them, they could scarcely look from, so frightful did the descent appear. In the more open places they had to walk over dry moss, burnt by the sun, and as slippery as glass, which caused them an abundance of falls; all delaying their progress, and taking them, by a retrograde motion, still further from the end of their expedition. Contusions and wounds they likewise received in no small number: but they did, at last, reach the extreme point of the mountain, and there all their hardships were forgotten; or rather the pride of having

surmounted them, rendered the remembrance of them agreeable.

Petrarch, full of admiration, looked around him with an eager transport, as if he, at that moment, enjoyed the faculty of sight, and the view of nature for the first time ; as if he saw the whole universe before him. He beheld the clouds at his feet, and imagined himself transported to Olympus. The Rhone flowed beneath their eyes ; they saw the Alps, and the steep mountains through which the proudest enemy of Rome, the impetuous Hannibal, opened a passage for himself.

After yielding for a time to the enthusiasm of a poet, Petrarch became sensible of a still purer source of exalted sentiment and happy inspiration : it was not that his imagination cooled, but that it regulated itself. He seated himself on the fragment of a rock, and, after a moment of silence,

he said, "And shall we then have  
" gone through all this fatigue, float-  
" ing, as it were, over creation, only  
" to fix our thoughts upon terrestrial  
" objects?"

So saying, he drew from his pocket  
a volume of the works of St. Augus-  
tine, which he always carried about  
with him, and opening it by chance,  
he read these words: "They run to  
" admire the waves of the sea, the  
" course of rivers, the extent of the  
" ocean, the height of mountains, but  
" themselves they neglect."

"Ah!" cried Petrarch, "if we have  
" willingly endured so much fatigue  
" to bring our bodies nearer by a few  
" fathoms to Heaven, what ought we  
" not to suffer, in order to do the same  
" by our souls! Yes, my dear bro-  
" ther, a divine hand has conducted  
" us to this apparently inaccessible  
" summit, and we are thus shewn the  
" world under our feet, that we may



“ contemplate it in its true point of  
“ view. From the height where we  
“ now are, how small, how insignifi-  
“ cant every thing appears that we  
“ admired when near. The devour-  
“ ing activity of time will crumble  
“ these rocks into dust, dry up those  
“ waves, level this mountain, which  
“ lifts its head above the clouds,  
“ and whilst these changes are pre-  
“ paring, long before they are con-  
“ summated, millions of generations  
“ will be annihilated. Let us thank  
“ Heaven, who, in order to spare us  
“ the sorrowful sight of these terrific  
“ devastations, has assigned us so few  
“ days to spend upon this vacillating  
“ globe, where nothing is stable ; every  
“ thing changes, every thing perishes.  
“ Yet, do we madly attach ourselves to  
“ this abode of ruins and of tombs ;  
“ we form establishments in the midst  
“ of decay : every thing speaks to us  
“ of death—even our studies ; history

“ is only the tradition of its ravages.  
“ If the fatal stroke is deferred, it is  
“ still threatened—always before our  
“ eyes—the greatest distance at which  
“ we can behold it is only trifling.  
“ There it immoveably awaits us ;  
“ drawn by an irresistible power to-  
“ wards the noiseless spectre, every  
“ day, every minute brings us nearer to  
“ him ; and in an instant he raises his  
“ dart and strikes the inevitable blow,  
“ by which we are for ever freed or  
“ lost. We are as void of reason  
“ as he would be who thrown into  
“ a rapid stream, instead of exerting  
“ all his strength to contend cou-  
“ rageously against it, should idly  
“ abandon himself to the waves, and  
“ try to embrace them, as they flowed  
“ around him to his destruction.—  
“ What use do we make of the hea-  
“ venly gifts of love and admiration ?  
“ The infinite goodness which has  
“ made the soul immortal, renders

“ capable of almost infinite love ; and  
“ what, indeed, would immortality be  
“ without that divine faculty ? Yet,  
“ on what objects do we bestow it ?  
“ Ah ! if we so often experience un-  
“ happiness, if our sensibility so often  
“ agitates and torments us, it is be-  
“ cause we give it a wrong direction ; be-  
“ cause our wandering hearts are never  
“ fixed where they ought to be !” . . . .

During this discourse Gerard, with his arms crossed upon his breast, listened to his brother's reflections with profound attention ; they made a lasting impression both on his mind and heart ; whilst Petrarch, on the contrary, no sooner descended into the valley, than he again gave himself up to all the illusions which had animated his existence, and seduced his imagination ; even though he had just before been declaiming against them, with as much sincerity as eloquence. There is always in any burst of extempore

feeling something dramatic and declamatory, which diverts the attention of the orator from his subject to himself — hence in discourses generally produce more effect on the hearts of those who listen to them, than of those by whom they are uttered.

Gerard, who had till then led a very dissipated life, became all at once thoughtful and silent. Petrarch imagined that he was growing somewhat weary of solitude, and therefore pressed him to go occasionally into the city ; but, to his great surprise, Gerard replied that he should relish nothing in future but seclusion and meditation ; and about a fortnight after, he declared his resolution of entering into the ecclesiastical state. Petrarch in vain opposed his intention. “ It is you “ that have opened my eyes,” said he ; “ I shall never forget the words, inspired by God himself, that you “ uttered on the majestic mountain,

“ whose summit is inaccessible to the  
“ vulgar, who are incapable of reflection. Your enchanting and sublime eloquence may draw forth, on  
“ many occasions, abundant admiration from the world, but it will  
“ never produce any thing again so  
“ truly wonderful and affecting.—  
“ You animated and sanctified the  
“ echoes of those pointed rocks, which,  
“ till then, had repeated only the voice  
“ of the thunder. Then, for the first  
“ time, did they waft to heaven the  
“ noble voice of a human being adoring his Maker, and converting a sinner to the knowledge of him. Yes,  
“ my dear brother, whilst you spoke  
“ your words were indelibly engraven  
“ on my heart, and I seemed to see  
“ celestial troops of angels burst forth  
“ from the clouds, and hover over the  
“ mountains, to listen and applaud  
“ you. From that moment every  
“ thought of my soul lifted itself to

“ the Supreme Being, never again to  
“ grovel on the earth ; and I now  
“ know only one wish, and that is to  
“ consecrate myself entirely to God.”

Petrarch yielded to a desire which, in fact, was not to be shaken. Gerard accordingly set out to Avignon, to enter into a seminary ; and when his studies were finished, he went into Italy, took orders, and became a member of the Chartreuse. Petrarch was much affected by the departure of Gerard. Whatever love we may have for solitude, we all find a prodigious difference between living quite alone, and with a friend, or indeed with any one capable of a benevolent feeling.

Petrarch thus deprived entirely of society, wrote to Boccacio, who was, as yet, poor and unknown, and whose first protector he had the honour to be—he conjured him to come and share his solitude with him, and ended his letter by saying, “ Do not shut your

“ ears against the call of friendship ;  
“ I have every thing here that is re-  
“ quisite for two friends, who want  
“ but one heart, and one house be-  
“ tween them.” Boccacio, however,  
could not go to him, for the king of  
Naples sent for him shortly after.

Petrarch, whilst he remained at  
Vaucluse, was diverted from his own  
inquietudes by an important public  
event, which occurred in the conspi-  
racy of Rienzi. This famous dema-  
gogue, born in the lower class of the  
people, was, from his infancy, brought  
up in a college, which was founded  
through charity : all he attained there  
only served to develope his pride, and  
pervert his character ; he had a great-  
ness, not of soul, but of ideas, which  
was always producing some gigantic  
schemes, generally extravagant, and  
often reprehensible. Astonished at his  
own knowledge, quickness, and natural  
eloquence ; in short, at advantages both

personal and mental, which are rare in any station, and which in his were wonderful, Rienzi at once blushed at his extraction, and conceived an implacable hatred towards all of a higher rank. His ambition was a sort of rebellion against fate, and assumed rather the impetuous character of revenge. Petrarch, whose mind had been fed with incessant study of Roman history, and who was devotedly attached to the real glory of his country, could not hear, without the liveliest emotion, that a conspirator had proclaimed public liberty in Rome, under the title of the Tribune of the People ; besides, he knew and admired Rienzi ; and notwithstanding his intimate connexion with the Colonnas, the heads of the opposite party, he could not hide the interest that he took in the fate of this bold and turbulent spirit ; nor were his friends offended by it ; for they placed it all to the account of his



enthusiastic genius, and therefore could not blame what they looked upon as a natural effect. The bishop of Lombez wrote repeatedly to Petrarch, at this period, begging him to return to Lombez, and pass the autumn with him. Laura was still away. Petrarch had need of some one to whom he might confide his griefs, his fears and hopes; and who would be capable of appreciating the verses he had to recite: he, therefore, yielded to the pressing entreaties of his friends, and quitting his retreat, returned to Lombez. He was received there with transport, and joyfully renewed the inexpressible charm of mutual confidence, and of the delightful conversations, in which each thinks only of the other.

A few days after his arrival he received a letter from Isoarda, in which she told him that Ermessenda and Laura were about to return; but that they did not mean to stop at Avignon,

as it was their intention to remain at the castle until the month of December. This letter imparted the sweetest consolation to Petrarch ; and Isoarda assured him that Laura shared in all his hopes and feelings. He then promised the bishop not to think of quitting him until the end of November.

Petrarch took long walks every day, in the wild environs of Lombez, with his two friends—Socrates and Lelius ; but he often left them, in order to wander alone in the woods and among the mountains. There, giving himself up to long and delightful reveries, he enjoyed all the fugitive enchantments which the imagination can so readily create ; disposed of the future according to his will ; saw cloudless fame and happiness before him ; and often a still more enviable delirium snatched him from the scene before him, to give reality to all his hopes. In the bosom of the forest he found his Laura : she seemed

to walk before him—he follows her steps ; he calls her—she slackens her pace, she turns her head ; he wins a partial glance ; but, alas ! at that moment, the vision disappears ! Then would he stop, and, sighing, engrave verses to her upon the bark of the trees ; but soon his ardent imagination would again reduce his reason and his senses, by its soft illusions. Sometimes, in an evening, he would wander forth, and indulge the fancy that he was going to meet Laura in the forest : the thickness of the foliage, and the shades of approaching night, scarcely permit him to distinguish her features ; but he hears the trembling touching accents of her voice. She speaks to him ! she listens to him ; she promises no more to avoid him ; she yields to another meeting.—Oh ! who but himself could have described the transports of his imaginary joy ! This fanciful inter-course formed one of the happiest pe-

riods of his life ; so fully did it make him acquainted with the powers of his own imagination. He every day courted new reveries : the more he yielded to them, the more perfect they became ; and so forcibly were they impressed upon his ardent mind, that he was enabled to fix them there for ever. It was no longer in the power of fortune to separate him from Laura ; he carried her living image about with him—not a mere remembrance, or an empty shadow—it was Laura herself, who, realized by love, stood perpetually before him : he could see her blush, and betray the sweetest emotion ; he could express sentiments for her, which, however she might feel them, she could never have gained the courage to own : he guessed them for her, in order that he might put them into the tenderest language. He imitated the soft inflections of her

voice, when he imagined her to speak ; and so perfect was the imitation to his ear, that a thousand times, in listening to it himself, he was overcome, and melted into tears. He was always more enthusiastic, and more happy, after these imaginary meetings :—nothing could mortify or grieve him in conversations of which he was the sole inventor ; and he always found Laura, in the course of them, more deserving than ever of his esteem, his admiration, and his poetry. He delighted in adorning this idol of his heart with every charm of virtue, modesty, and wit ; he loved to give her eloquence and genius ; and all his most ingenious thoughts, his most affecting discourses, his purest and most heroic sentiments, he attributed to her. Carefully did he retain them in remembrance : in recollecting them with transport, he adored his own work, at the very time when he was

utterly forgetful of himself. He was thinking only of Laura—he was admiring her alone.

One day he had gone into the forest rather later than usual, and got quite bewildered among its paths. He was then obliged to rouse himself from his reverie, and fix his attention upon finding his way back ; night, however, overtook him in the attempt. He was at a loss what to do ; for the weather was stormy, and the rain had already begun to fall. The mutterings of the distant thunder, the freshness of the shower, the lightning which, piercing through the gloom around him, shed, at intervals, its pure and brilliant radiance on the waving branches, which is always so solemn in the midst of forests, or unknown paths, the vague recollection of a thousand wonderful and tragic adventures, which a night at once so mysterious, and so perplexing, recalled, seemed all to unite in order to

fill him with uneasiness and doubt. Far less would have been sufficient to fire his romantic and poetic genius. Despairing of being able to extricate himself from the forest before day light, he no longer thought of any thing but of calling up the ideas which might most interest him. No enchanter could possess in more perfection than himself, the happy art of embellishing the gloomiest scenes, and even of changing them into those of the most agreeable description. He imagined himself to be transported to the place where Laura dwelt, and that he was wandering round the castle. "Oh," he cried, "thou sole object of my thoughts! what art thou doing at this moment, whilst I seek in vain to discover the spot that encloses thee! The wind rises, and scatters the last leaves of autumn over my head. Dost thou not, in that antique habitation, hear it sigh through the loop holes, and

“ across the towered battlements ! Ah,  
“ would that it could bear to thee my  
“ sighs and groans, and bring me in  
“ return the sounds of thy enchanting  
“ voice.” As he spoke thus, he started and stopped, for he heard, as if at a distance, the clear tones of a youthful voice. He thought at first that they were the produce of his own imagination ; he listened, and could scarcely separate what he heard, from the illusions which so continually charmed away his evenings. He went forward, however, and scarcely dared to breathe, so eagerly did he listen ; he drew nearer to the spot whence the sounds proceeded ; his heart palpitated violently ; he heard the very words : amazed, he proceeded, guided by a feeble light, which glimmered through the trees. What was his surprise on hearing one of his own finest sonnets ; he recollected at the same moment the air, and the verses which he had composed



for them ; he listened to the words which were then so expressive of his situation.

“ Alone and sad these desert haunts I trace.”

The feeble glare of the light shewed him a small ruin, entirely covered with moss ; it was a hermitage. The voice ceased, after having sung the first verses. Petrarch took up those which followed, and notwithstanding the rain and the increasing fury of the storm, he sung them with the most touching expression, particularly the last lines :

“ Yet no retreat so rugged or so drear

“ I find, but Love will venture to draw near ;

“ In all my painful wanderings him I see,

“ Conversing still with him, and he with me.”

Whilst he was singing, the profoundest silence reigned within the hermitage ; but as soon as he had finished, the door opened, and a young man threw himself into his arms, exclaiming “ Petrarch alone can thus sing his own

“ verses.” So saying, he led him into the hermitage, and conducted him into a sort of room ; where all the furniture, that was to be seen, consisted of a few straw mats, which served as a bed ; a table, a reading desk, an es-critoire, a guitar, some books, two wooden benches, and a small statue of St. Agnes, which was placed in a niche. Petrarch asked where the solitary owner of the hermitage might be. “ There is no other hermit here than “ myself,” replied the young man, sighing. “ And how long have you led “ this austere life ?” “ Two years.” “ And what may be your age ?” “ Three-and-twenty years—but,” continued the young hermit, “ let me now “ think only of my good fortune in “ receiving under my humble roof the “ celebrated poet, in whose love I have “ taken so lively an interest, and “ whose sublime poetry I so much admire. I also am a lover, and I also

“ write verses ; but, happily for me,  
“ not in the same language as Pe-  
“ trarch’s ; I may, therefore, hope one  
“ day to equal the most illustrious of  
“ my predecessors, and to surpass my  
“ rivals. I am a provençal poet.”

Whilst the young anchorite thus spoke,  
Petrarch was admiring his figure, and  
his pleasing countenance. He asked  
him his name. “ Roger de Machault,”\*  
replied the young man. “ That name  
“ is familiar to me;” replied Petrarch ;  
“ notwithstanding the youth of him  
“ to whom it belongs, it is already  
“ known to fame, and deservedly so.  
“ You are the youngest, and the most  
“ interesting of the Troubadours. I  
“ have frequently sung your hymn to  
“ St. Agnes : it is well known that you  
“ were only fifteen years of age when  
“ you composed it, and there is not a  
“ young girl in either Provence or  
“ Languedoc, who does not know it

\* A celebrated Troubadour of that period.

“ by heart. But,” continued Petrarch,  
“ I was told that you had set out on a  
“ long pilgrimage to the Holy Land.  
“ The part you have chosen is, how  
“ ever, still more extraordinary : at  
“ your age to bury yourself in this  
“ manner, in such profound and con-  
“ tinual solitude !” “ No, I am under  
“ no vow to remain here ; my retreat  
“ is only an expiatory penance, and  
“ in a year my exile will be at an end.”  
These words exciting Petrarch’s curi-  
osity, he enquired into their meaning ;  
when Roger promised to relate his  
history to him, on condition that he  
would pass that night, and the morn-  
ing of the next day, with him in the  
hermitage. It was six miles from Lom-  
bez. A young boy of fourteen, who  
waited upon Roger, offered to set off  
immediately to the Bishop, with a mes-  
sage from Petrarch ; for it was natural  
to imagine that his absence would  
make his friends very uneasy. The

clock in the hermitage struck ten, as the boy set out, with orders to sleep at Lombez, and not think of returning till the next morning. He was desired, also, not to mention the hermitage, but merely to say, that Petrarch having mistaken his way, and being overtaken by the storm, had been obliged to stop to sleep at a cottage. Roger offered Petrarch the frugal fare, fit for a hermit, and after a light supper, yielding to the entreaties of his guest, he thus began his history :

“ I was born in the Barony of Foix, of an ancient family, which was ruined by the crusades ; for my grandfather sold the greater part of his estates, when he set out for the Holy Land, in the train of the king of France, Lewis IX, and was killed before Tunis. I was then an infant in the cradle, with a twin sister, in an ancient castle, the only remnant of wealth that heaven had spared to

us. My mother, overwhelmed with grief, died before the period of her mourning was expired ; and my sister Agnes and I, were put, at the age of five years, under the care of an aged grand-mother, who had out-lived all her children. She brought us up in the castle in which we were born, and devoted herself entirely to our education. She was not a learned woman ; but she was sensible and good. She taught my sister to be industrious, neat, pious, modest and submissive. To me, she endeavoured to impart patience and perseverance ; the two virtues most necessary in the course of human life ; and which religion alone can place upon an immoveable basis. We read a chapter of the Bible every day ; and when it was ended, our worthy grand-mother, in a voice, weak through age, but still correct, sung some of the canticles or lamentations to us.

That of Folquet de Romans, upon the death of the sainted monarch, Lewis IX, awakened so much admiration in me, that I learned it by heart. It affected me the more, from my being told by my grandmother, that Folquet had accompanied this great king into Asia and Africa; and had, more than once, with his viol, and his heroic songs, recalled the ardour of the Crusaders, when they were almost exhausted by obstacles which appeared insurmountable. I admired the influence of music and poetry over the noblest actions; these enchanting arts which seem created only to charm our leisure in the gentle bosom of peace. From this time, I became passionately fond of poetry; making it the subject of my studies, and frequently endeavouring to write it.

“ I had just attained my fourteenth year, when Anselm Faydit, one of

our most celebrated poets, came to our castle. I listened to his songs with inexpressible transports; he was pleased with my unaffected admiration; and conceiving a friendship for me, he passed six weeks more with us. I ventured to shew him my own feeble attempts: he encouraged me; gave me instructions, and, by his kindness and advice, carried my enthusiasm for the art in which he excelled to its utmost pitch.

“ About a mile from our castle, there was a spot which had been long famous as a place of pilgrimage. It was called *the Fountain of St. Agnes*. The fountain itself springs from a rock, shaded with pines, lime-trees, and poplars. A deep niche is hollowed out of the rock, for the reception of a stone statue of the Saint, who is represented with her long tresses hanging down, as they



were miraculously extended in a moment, when she was exposed naked to the eyes of her persecutors, the pagans. All the young men and women of the district used to go there, to offer up their tributes, with several pious ceremonies, which had been scrupulously observed for many ages. It was a belief universally diffused, that young girls who went to invoke the Saint, on the day that they entered their fifteenth year would be, for the remainder of their lives, particularly protected by her, and secretly preserved, from all snares, seductions, and temptations to vice. My sister Agnes, doubly revered the Saint, because she was her patroness; we, therefore, resolved to make our pilgrimage together, the day we were fifteen; and it was on this occasion that I composed the hymn of Saint Agnes, which has since been constantly

sung by all the young people in the country.

“ On the eve of the appointed day, we received my grandmother’s blessing, on our knees; my sister, followed by twelve young girls belonging to the castle, and the village, all clothed in white, and with their hair falling loosely over their shoulders, and I at the head of as many young men as I had been able to get together, set out by the light of the moon to the rock of St. Agnes. Each of us carried in one hand, a waxen taper, lighted; and in the other, a lock of hair, to offer to the Saint, in commemoration of the miracle which protected her modesty. Oh what charms this nocturnal expedition had for us all! The night was brilliant and mild; at intervals we sung hymns, and it seemed as if angels joined their celestial voices to ours. When we were silent, we contem-

plated the heavens with the extasy so unalloyed, of innocence, united to piety. No self-reproach, no painful remembrance ruffled its calmness; our hearts at ease, and undisguised, lifted themselves, without effort, up to the author of our happy existence; for they were not dragged downwards by the heavy chain of vice and evil passions. Full of joy and delight, we fixed our eyes upon the stars, and admired with fresh transports the beautiful spectacle of cloudless night. The thought of a Supreme Power was, to us, a matter of exultation, without any mixture of uneasy reflection; holy reverence was to us, only a profound degree of veneration, rendered more perfect and submissive by the love with which it was combined. In short, we went on with ardour, because we had a religious end in view; and we wandered not, for an instant,

from our right destination. Such ought to be the grand pilgrimage of life !

“ In about half an hour we arrived at the fountain. My sister’s hair was remarkably beautiful, and fell even to her feet. She offered a tress of it up to the Saint, alike singular for its length, its silky softness, and its shining golden colour. After having finished our prayers, sung the hymn, which I had composed, and drunk the waters of the fountain, we returned to the castle: but these were only half the ceremonies belonging to the pilgrimage of St. Agnes. The next day we set out again with the first rays of the sun. My sister and her companions still had their hair, deshevelled, and we held in one hand the lighted tapers as before, and in the other, large branches of roses, and orange flowers. As we drew near the fountain, we perceived a young gentleman of agreeable

appearance on his knees before the rock ; his horse was fastened to a tree near him, and he held in his hand the long light ringlet of my sister's hair, which he gazed upon in admiration. At length he rose, but seeing my sister approach with her beautiful tresses flowing around her, he stood as if rooted to the spot, and exclaimed : " It is she herself." Agnes blushed ; we continued, however, to sing, and I chaunted my hymn, which the stranger seemed to listen to with pleasure ; he knelt down along with us, and helped us to dress the flowers for the altar of the Saint. When the ceremony was finished, he asked me my name, and put many questions to me respecting my sister. In return he told me that his name was Blenac ; that he belonged to the court of Count de Foix, our feudal lord ; and that in hunting with him he had lost himself among these woods. I begged him to

rest himself at the castle; he consented, and spent the next day with us. He seemed much pleased with my singing and my poetry; but I saw, very well, that he was far more struck with the beauty and simplicity of Agnes. In short, he soon became deeply in love. He was amiable, rich, and one of the most powerful noblemen at his court. He asked my sister's hand in marriage; and the ceremony took place at the latter end of the autumn. He wished me to accompany them home. I promised my good grand-mother to pass three months in every year, and after receiving her warmest blessing, I set out with my sister. Blenac immediately took us to court, and I was presented to the Prince, who loaded me with proofs of regard, and retained me about his own person. Phoebus, Count de Foix, was then scarcely twenty years of age; alike remarkable for the graces of form and mind, he

eclipsed all the most shining young noblemen at court. His love of music and poetry no way interfered with his attention to business ; he was full of gallantry towards females, yet in no wise suffered himself to be governed by them ; he was at once munificent and economical ; his court was sumptuous, and his subjects happy. I took a passionate liking for this prince ; and, during two years, my budding muse was entirely consecrated to him. At the end of that time, the high character of the beautiful Agnes of Navarre, induced him to enter into a matrimonial negotiation for that princess. He ordered me to compose some verses on the occasion ; I complied ; they were sent to her in my name ; and, to my great surprise, she condescended to answer them in a sonnet replete with elegance and wit. I then wrote again, and declared that Agnes of Navarre should, from that time, be

the inspirer of my verse, and the lady of my thoughts. She replied, that she would accept me for her knight and bard.

“ A poetical treaty being thus established between us, I found it an easy matter to fulfil the agreement I had entered into ; in fact, I thought no longer of any one but her ; and for her all my poetry was framed. The Count de Foix saw whatever verses I wrote, and was always pleased with them. I was sometimes internally piqued that he did not appear jealous of the composer. I was aware that poets are privileged to say any thing, but I said only what I felt ; my heart was penetrated, my imagination on fire, and I was mortified, beyond measure, to find so little importance attached to the most passionate avowal of my sentiments, that it neither recommended me to the Princess as a lover, nor made me formidable to the Count as a rival.



At length, the marriage of the Count with the Princess was finally agreed on. He received her picture, and shewed it to me ; he smiled at the transports of my admiration ; but his raileries pierced me to the very soul. The next day, I pretended to have received letters, to inform me that my grandmother was ill, and wished to see me. I accordingly obtained leave of absence, and set out. I only spent a fortnight in our old habitation, among the forests, where I had passed the happy days of my infancy. Under the shade of trees, whose bark yet bore the traces of my earliest compositions, I read the verses which Agnes de Navarre had made for me, and I composed others again, to her. Alas ! I was then unable to descant upon the charms of solitude and stillness ; my muse, at once disquieted and melancholy, could only express the vague and tumultuous agitations of an unfor-

fortunate attachment, which, though it could scarcely be said to be rooted in the heart, nevertheless effectually overturned my imagination. I incessantly represented to myself this Princess, so celebrated for her beauty and her wit. I was equally tormented by the fear, and the wish, to see, and listen to her once more. Certain of adoring her, as soon as I became acquainted with her, it was in vain for me to fly. The lively presentiment which she inspired in me, of an exalted attachment, closed my heart against every other impression. It pursued me every where ; it destroyed my repose ; and still I had not the resolution to return to the Count, whose marriage had been solemnized a few days after I left him. In this perplexity I resolved upon travelling ; I wandered about from one castle to another, and made a long stay in that of the beautiful Hermione,

Countess de Sault, who had been a widow three years. Inconsolable for the loss of a husband, whom she tenderly loved, the melancholy expressions of my songs interested her—the plaintive viol, and strains which breathed only the sorrows of love, sunk every day more deeply into her heart.—Priding herself on the constancy of her griefs, she took a pleasure in the tears that I made her shed, and imagined that, in listening to me, she was only feeding her regret. In short, I became so necessary to her, that, if I but estranged myself for a few minutes, she would send for me ; though when I appeared, she only turned pale, and remained silent. If I spoke, she listened with a constrained smile ; and would afterwards say, sighing, “ Give me a love song.” She knew that I had never seen the object of all my verses, Agnes of Navarre ; and she was

far from imagining the extent of the insensate passion which disturbed my very reason.

“The secret sentiments of Hermione were soon penetrated by all who surrounded her. Scarcely could any one recognize in her the inconsolable widow, who, during three years, had dwelt only upon her husband and her griefs ; who had denied herself every pleasure, even the abstracted ones of music and poetry ; and who had rejected with as much anger as pride, all the attentions, and all the vows of those who would have aspired to her hand. Now, silent and reserved, she remained plunged in the deepest melancholy ; but she no longer lamented her unhappiness, and no longer listened to any consolation, except mine.

“It was soon rumoured abroad, that I was beloved by the Countess ; and on a natural supposition, it was added, that I adored her—that Love, alor

had led me to her castle, and retained me there. The news soon flew to the court of the Count de Foix ; and my sister, who was in the Countess's train, wrote to me on the subject. Through a foolish whim, I suffered her to believe that I really was in love with Hermione. I was sure she would shew my letter, and I must own I was desirous that the Countess should feel piqued with it ; or, at any rate, that it should occasion her to bestow a thought upon me. My sister did, indeed, shew my letter ; insomuch that copies were taken of it, and one of them was sent to Hermione herself, who was easily persuaded that I had written my real sentiments. In the mean time, I received a command, in verse, from Agnes of Navarre, to return, without delay, to the Court of the Count de Foix. I was delighted with this despotic manner of disposing of me ; notwithstanding what she had heard of my supposed love for

Hermione. "She makes herself sure of me," said I; "she requires no explanation; she entertains no doubts; she calls me; she is certain I shall obey; and that I shall not hesitate to sacrifice every thing to her. Is not such confidence in my devotion to her a sort of return! I may well be proud of my poetry, since it has enabled her to form such a just idea of my heart and principles. I shall not disappoint her generous expectation—it is settled—to-morrow I shall set off." The next evening, without entering into any explanation, I informed Hermione that I was recalled by my master, and must submit myself to his orders. Hermione made herself sure that she was beloved by me; she was therefore not uneasy, though she was grieved at my departure; in fact, her beauty, her rank, and fortune, might well give her a good opinion

of herself. She was silent a moment ; then taking from her neck a superb chain of precious stones, she threw it round my viol, which was always kept in her cabinet, and which was laid upou a table near her. “ I wish,” said she, “ to ornament the instrument, which in your hands, is so expressive of tenderness. It deserves the sweetest of appellations, and for the future it shall be called the *Viol of Love* ; let it have no other name, and let that name remind you of Herminie. Receive this chain—return it in a month, and one of more importance shall await your acceptance. Adieu ! Roger, remember that henceforward you must sing no more of Agnes of Navarre, to your *Viol of Love*.” In spite of the extreme embarrassment that this conversation occasioned me, I yet would have summoned courage to speak frankly, and undeceive Her-

mione, but without giving me time to reply, she hastily arose and left the room. I resolved, therefore, to delay my departure a few hours, and to see her again the next morning. —Accordingly, I sent to request a private conference with her ; but I was informed that she had left the castle soon after she quitted me, and intended to travel for three months. Thus it was impossible for me to convince her of her error, and explain my real sentiments ; the thought, however, that I should soon see Agnes of Navarre, effaced every other idea from my mind. I set off, and travelled with such rapidity, that I arrived in the middle of the night at the Court of the Count de Foix. The next morning I had an audience with the Prince, who received me with his accustomed kindness, and told me that I should be introduced that evening to the Princess. “ She is anxious to see you



he added, "you will find her surrounded with our most famous poets, whom the festivities of our marriage have drawn to my court ; but the Princess flatters herself that her troubadour, notwithstanding his youth, will eclipse them all. You must, therefore, prepare yourself for a fine contest among them."

I went to my own apartments as soon as I left the Prince, and waited there for the appointed hour, with more fear and anxiety than impatience : the more I reflected upon this interview, which I had so ardently longed for, the more I dreaded it : I seemed to think, that in consenting to see Agnes of Navarre, I had committed some rash act which was to decide my fate, and might for ever destroy my peace !

At length the important moment arrived : I was ushered into the presence of the Princess ; and as soon as ever I cast my eyes upon her, I felt so violent

a fluttering at my heart, that I could scarcely stand : the beauty, the grace, the imposing majesty of her figure, all made Agnes of Navarre far exceed, even the portrait which my admiration of her had drawn. She received me with an amiable sweetness, which completed my confusion, and my secret agitation.

Towards the close of the evening, several Provençal poets recited their verses. Peter d'Auvergne, Gerard de Borneil, and Berner de Ventadour, obtained great applause from the brilliant assembly, and I likewise could praise them with pleasure ; for I felt myself, at least, equal to them. The next day, I took my viol to the Princess and sung, for the first time, before her, and in presence of my rivals—no wonder that I surpassed myself ! my triumph was complete ! I was enthusiastically applauded. The poets who listened to me could not hide th

jealousy ; but I was so happy to see the Princess proud of my success, that no unworthy feeling could find admittance into my heart ; far from enjoying their defeat, I was anxious to console them under it—for happiness naturally renders us generous and modest. In prosperity, we ought always to be conciliating and indulgent ; for pride, under such circumstances, can only be considered as downright arrogance.

“ When the Princess rose to retire, I was going to leave the saloon, with the rest of the company ; but Agnes and the Prince called me back, and I followed them into a smaller room, where we found only two or three persons belonging to the court. Relieved from the presence of the crowd, the Princess declared she would enjoy herself for an hour in this cabinet ; and seating herself on the sofa, she began to talk to me, and asked to look at the chain of precious stones which was

hung round my instrument. She wished to know who had given it to me : I replied, that I had received it from the Countess de Sault. She was silent for a moment, and then said, " The Countess had no right to offer such a gift to my troubadour, and he has been guilty of an infidelity to me, in accepting it. Sacrifice it to me," added she, " by way of expiation." At these words, I threw the viol at her feet, with transport :—she unfastened the chain, and put it round her neck ; after which, she dismissed us all. As for me, I could only recollect, of all that had passed during my interview with her, these words : " My troubadour has been guilty of an infidelity to me." I found a distracting charm in them ; though they were uttered in the presence of the Prince. I knew very well that expressions of regard were of no consequence, merely as applied to a troubadour ; neverthe-

less, from the mouth of Agnes, they carried irresistible seduction with them.

The next day I was summoned by the Princess, and found with her Bernard de Ventadour, the most famous of all the poets, whom I had seen on the preceding evening. Agnes had kept my viol till now ; she restored it to me, decorated with pearls and diamonds. Bernard de Ventadour, at her request, sung several pieces ; and, after listening to him, Agnes took Hermione's chain of precious stones, which I had given up to her, off the table, and said to him, " I will give you this chain, on condition that you go to the Countess de Sault, and tell her, that you received it from my hand." " —No, madam," I cried, " this chain, since yesterday, has been your property ; for that reason I shall dispute it with Bernard de Ventadour. We will each compose a poem on glory ; they shall

my of the Floral  
 shortly to distri-  
 and he, whose com-  
 he declared the best,  
 ve from your hands the  
 you are so condescending  
 ver." The Princess smiled  
 words. "You have thought  
 a very ingenious method of  
 thwarting me," said she, "in my  
 scheme of revenge ; nevertheless, I  
 " cannot say any thing in opposition  
 " to it." Bernard de Ventadour was  
 forced, though not without regret, to  
 yield to the condition ; and from that  
 day we laboured assiduously at our  
 stanzas on glory. Bernard celebrated  
 the fame of warriors ; and I, chusing  
 less vulgar heros, sung in praise of  
 those benefactors of the human race,  
 who had restrained a barbarous people  
 by the laws of wisdom, and taught  
 them a pure morality, industrious ha-  
 bits, and useful arts. We sent our

verses to Toulouse ; I obtained the prize, and received, at the same time, the golden violet, and the chain, which the Princess restored to me, with the addition of a medal attached to it, on which were engraved her arms and name.

I had now been six months at this court ; loaded with marks of favour from the Princess : the more I saw of her the more I admired her, and the more my passion for her triumphed over my heart and reason. Sometimes I abandoned myself to the most extravagant hopes ; and, at others, I experienced at once all the agitations of an unfortunate attachment, and a guilty conscience. I would have laid down my life for the Count de Foix, and yet I could only look upon him as a rival whose presence was insupportable to me. He idolized Agnes ; he was beloved by her. I was often constrained to sing of the felicity of their union,

myself the jealous witness of it ! Agnes commanded me ! but on the other side, I had the privilege of celebrating her whom I thus adored, and of expressing in my verses to her, all the feelings with which she inspired me. Agnes always answered me. I knew very well that her apparently tender language was a mere exercise of her fancy ; a kind of part, such as actors play in a theatre ; and that her melting expressions had nothing in common with her real sentiments ; but still the charming verses that she addressed to me were written by her own hand ; they were still her own composition, and I could not resist the enchantment of their sweet deceit. Meanwhile, the beautiful Hermione had written to me in vain, to ask me to return. I thought that my silence would be sufficiently explanatory of my sentiments, and that it would spare me the pain of any further reply. Soon, however, she wa



informed of the use that I had made of the chain, with which she had ornamented the instrument which still retained the tender appellation she had bestowed upon it. Bernard de Ventadour, after his defeat, quitted the Court of Agnes in a pique, and going immediately to the Countess de Saulx's castle, he related the whole affair to her. Her grief on hearing it was excessive ; and instead of endeavouring to conceal it, she gave it the utmost publicity, by openly citing me to the Court of Love. Such an event is perhaps more memorable in the life of a troubadour, than in that of a knight. We who devote our talents at least as much to the cause of love as valour, ought, above all, to be irreproachable in the eyes of females ; if they honour their knights as the champions of innocence, and injured helplessness, they love in us the eulogisers of their modesty and beauty—we celebrate

them, and they judge us. It is they, above all, who give renown to our verses; and they make a common cause against a disloyal troubadour. A poet perjured in love, and known as such, loses at once, his mistress, the object of his affections, and his reputation. Thus I was every way interested in justifying myself.

As soon as Agnes heard that I was cited in the Court of Love, she sent for me to her. I found her alone in her cabinet; "Roger" said she, "I knew that you had been in love with the Countess de Sault, but I was not aware that your passion was returned; have you really entered into any engagement with her?" "No madame," answered I; "and since, in my defence, I shall be obliged to publicly declare the Countess's condescension towards me, I may say now that I never spoke to her of love; and that, when she revealed her sentiments to

“ me, and offered me her hand, she  
“ left me no time to reply, but abruptly  
“ quitted me.” “ But,” said Agnes,  
“ has she not written to you.” “ Yes  
“ madam, but I have not answered  
“ her. She construes my silence  
“ into a positive refusal, and for this  
“ it is that she cites me to the Court  
“ of Love.” “ She can only complain  
“ of your infidelity and perjury: and  
“ after this recital, it will be seen that  
“ she is in the wrong. But she is  
“ young, beautiful, rich and nobly  
“ born; how is it that you could re-  
“ ject so desirable an establishment?”  
At these words, I lost all command  
over myself, and falling at the Prin-  
cess’s feet, I declared my passion for  
her in the most ardent terms. In a  
moment she recoiled, and casting on  
me a look fraught with anger and asto-  
nishment. “ How!” she exclaimed,  
“ do you presume to talk thus to me,  
“ when we are alone, and to tell me

" in plain prose, that you love me ! . . . .

" Unworthy troubadour, leave me.

" Send back the verses I have written

" to you ; all yours shall be instantly

" consigned to the flames."

At these terrible words I stood motionless and aghast ; the Princess reiterated her orders to me to go out of her sight, and to leave the palace, never to return. " Ah ! madam !" I at last exclaimed, " do not, for a single moment of wretched folly, ruin the prospects, and crush the genius of him whom you deigned to chuse for your troubadour ! Where will be my emulation, what can fame hold out for me, if you reject for ever the homage of my muse ? True, I ought not to have expressed my sentiments towards you in the mere language of mortals ; I ought not to have quitted Parnassus for a moment, when I was speaking of love to you ; but, alas ! I was transported beyond

“ myself, in being thus alone with  
“ you ; whilst I gazed upon you, I be-  
“ held, with delight, all the brilliant  
“ court of the God of Harmony : I saw,  
“ at once, the Muses and Minerva,  
“ Venus and the Graces. My real  
“ ecstasy made me forget my assumed  
“ part. A worshipper cannot always  
“ recollect that he ought only to be a  
“ poet. Punish me ; banish me—but  
“ let it be with hope of recall.”—“ Set  
“ out, then,” she replied, “ seek some  
“ lonely hermitage in the bosom of a  
“ forest ; there remain two years in  
“ complete solitude, and bring your  
“ talents to perfection. I forbid you,  
“ during that time, to write of love—  
“ melancholy, repentance, and virtue  
“ must be your themes. At the end  
“ of that period return here, and I  
“ will restore you to my confidence  
“ and friendship.”

After the mortal fear that had seized  
me, at the thought of having for ever

forfeited the esteem of the Countess de Foix, I was no way dismayed at this sentence, severe as it was. I felt only joy at obtaining my pardon on any terms; and promised to obey her as soon as my cause was decided in the Court of Love; for as I had been cited there, I could not help making my appearance. Accordingly I took leave of the Count and Countess, and set off immediately for Avignon; where the Court was to be held. It was not without trepidation that I prepared to appear before so brilliant a tribunal of young ladies, who in general united all the charms of mind to those of person. It has not unfrequently happened that a lover, falsely accused of inconstancy, has become really unfaithful, in making his defence before such judges. The ladies who plead in the Parliament of Love, never appear when they are the accusers—they come

there only to defend themselves : thus I had not the mortification of hearing Hermione make her complaint against me in person ; instead of which she sent, according to the established custom, her most intimate friend—the charming Eloisa, countess of Bauffremont ; who undertook to plead her cause ; nor could Hermione possibly have entrusted it to a more powerful advocate.

The names of the Countess de Sault and of the Troubadour of Agnes of Navarre, who had been so recently crowned at the Floral Games, attracted a prodigious number of spectators to a scene so calculated to interest the curiosity of ladies, and of poets. These assemblies are composed solely of the young of both sexes ; persons of middle age, and those who are getting into years, take but little interest in love matters : we recall with pleasure the

recollections of our infancy ; but worn out passions leave behind them only a confused remembrance of storms, and tempests.

**END OF VOL. I.**





# PETRARCH

AND

## LAURA.

BY MADAME DE GENLIS.

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*TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.*

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".....ben convengono ambedui ;  
Ch'egli è di lei ben degno, ella di lui."

*Tasso.*

"True glory is the prize of virtue."

*Petrarch.*

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1820.

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# P E T R A R C H

AND

## LAURA.

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AT nine o'clock in the morning I repaired to the Court of Love that was solemnly assembled to hear and to try me. On entering the hall, I perceived several poets, who were my rivals, and who doubtless hoped for a sentence that should discourage and disgrace those talents which they envied. I was not intimidated by the appearance of my enemies, but my agitation was extreme when I surveyed the young and brilliant Areopagus which was either to absolve or to condemn me. The beauteous Brunissenda, the niece

the  
I was  
on the bench  
after a few mo-  
and silence, Aloise de  
rose. She was equally  
ed by the delicacy of her  
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1 RCH

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and  
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nted, so far from  
e, would rather mourn  
and as I am bound to de-  
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sity I will acknowledge her weak-  
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mity; and to crown her misfortune  
she still loves the faithless troubadour  
who has deceived her!"

This skilful exordium produced all  
the effect that Aloise had no doubt  
expected from it. She was interrupted  
by unanimous plaudits, and at the

of the celebrated Cardinal de Talleyrand, acted as president. She was seated on a kind of throne placed in the centre of the charming and majestic circle formed by the other ladies, whose beauty, dignified air, and splendid dresses exhibited a spectacle alike impressive and enchanting. I was directed to take my place on the bench of the accused, and after a few moments of profound silence, Aloïse de Bauffremont rose. She was equally distinguished by the delicacy of her complexion, and the dazzling whiteness of her dress ; she wore a robe of silver cloth, fastened with emerald clasps ; and her head was crowned with a garland of roses. She made obeisance to the president and desired to be heard : all eyes were instantly fixed upon the speaker. Full well I knew, while I beheld her, how much the charms of her face and the expression of suavity and modesty diffused

over her whole person, must prepossess the audience in her favour and consequently against me ; and for the first time in my life I felt pain in admiring female elegance and beauty.

“ I demand justice,” said she, “ against Roger de Machault, and I am his only accuser : she whose heart he has seduced and whose expectations he has disappointed, so far from desiring vengeance, would rather mourn in private ; and as I am bound to declare the whole truth to the public and to this august tribunal, instead of praising my friend for her generosity I will acknowledge her weakness : she forgives without magnanimity ; and to crown her misfortune she still loves the faithless troubadour who has deceived her !”

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It is, indeed, evident from Petrarch's letters, that this virtuous ecclesiastic combined with the most inflexible austerity of the principles of religion, all the indulgence enjoined by the Gospel not for sins but for the sinner. It was a general notion in those times, that toleration could not be practised except in regard to persons, and that it would be the most dangerous of inconsistencies to extend it to precepts, because in morals every thing is positive, absolute, and necessary.

Meanwhile the autumn passed away ; and towards the end of October, Petrarch received a letter from Isoarda,

for him who could so admirably express love and melancholy. Meanwhile the perfidious minstrel who seduced by affecting to pity her, could not remain ignorant of his triumph ; all who were about Hermione discovered her secret, and she entrusted it to me. This female, worthy of universal homage for her virtue, her understanding and her beauty—this lady, who had refused so many splendid matches—had determined to wed a humble troubadour ! She thought that a woman does not sacrifice an illustrious name, when she relinquishes it to assume that of the man of her heart ; and that we cannot make a better use of a large fortune than by conferring it on those we love. At length, Hermione, being compelled to take a journey of some months, before she set off, made a distinct avowal of her sentiments to Roger, who did not undeceive her, and she departed under the fatal error of which she is at this

still more by the conversation of Roger, conceived an extraordinary project which he also put in execution. He resolved to realize the chimeras which had so often plunged him into the most delicious reveries, by actually strolling about the environs of the castle where Laura resided ; for he knew that it would be six weeks before she returned to Avignon. Isoarda had always prevented him from visiting this castle, even in the absence of Ermessenda ; but he possessed an accurate plan of it, all the details of which Isoarda had explained to him ; and there was an inscription in Petrarch's hand-writing on the window of Laura's bed-chamber. This chamber was situated on the first floor, at one of the corners of the building ; it overlooked the country, and all that separated it from a branch of the river, which ran beneath the windows, was a very nar-

row bank bordered with reeds and rushes.

Petrarch, on approaching the castle, resolved, in order that he might not be known, to pass himself off in the neighbourhood as a troubadour, who was travelling in haste and had not time to stop at the residences of the gentry, where, according to the custom of those times, a minstrel could not help remaining several days, if he solicited hospitality. As, in pursuance of this design, it was necessary for him to change his name, he assumed that of his friend, Roger de Machault. He intended about night-fall to reach the castle of Ermessenda, to pass under Laura's windows, and to depart again at day-break.

He arrived as he had purposed, and was not more than two hundred paces from the village, when all at once a shower fell with such violence as to oblige him to take shelter under

expression which overpowered her ; I found unintentionally the way to her heart by simply depicting the feelings of my own ; art alone will never produce such an effect. Hermione mistook the sympathy of misfortune for that of love ; she conceived that this genuine language of a suffering and impassioned soul was addressed to her ; I attributed her emotion to the recollection of past sorrows : we listened to without understanding one another ; for though we could not doubt the truth of our sentiments, we made a false application of them. In short, it was soothing to me to impart my pangs to her who knew all their keenness, and to whom I gave credit for a constancy equal to my own, that is to say equally hopeless, yet equally proof against all attacks. How indeed could I have divined her secret without inexcusable presumption ?....And when, at the moment of her departure, she

hastily revealed it to me in a very few words, modesty forbade her to wait for my answer and in an instant she was gone. The next morning I went to seek her for the purpose of undeceiving her, and found that she had set off in the night.....You now know the whole. Will you punish me because I have not had vanity enough to believe that I was beloved by a person of such high rank, and celebrated for the affliction into which she was plunged? Will you punish me for having sacrificed every thing to the unfortunate passion which consumes me? The mistress of my affections can neither share nor authorize my sentiments ; I am therefore bound by no vows ; honour left me free, but I have not been the less faithful to love ; and neither ambition, nor the glory of the noblest conquest has been capable of seducing me for a moment. I have done ; pronounce sentence, and re-



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aged elm, which stood on the bank of the river. A company of young peasants had during the whole evening been dancing under this tree, where they were still assembled: they surrounded the supposed minstrel and questioned him with kind curiosity. He introduced himself under his borrowed name; and as the rain suddenly ceased, he began to sing *the Complaint of Agnes*, composed by Roger, and accompanied it upon his immortal lute. Though it was by this time quite dark, the enchanted peasants did not return to their homes till they had heard the last stanza. Petrarch desired to be conducted to the neighbouring cottage of a fisherman, and there having expressed a wish to make an excursion on the river, a boatman offered to attend him, on condition that he should be detained no longer than three quarters of an hour. Petrarch took his lute and embarked with deep emotion;

he ordered the boatman to steer towards the angle of the mansion in which Laura's chamber was situated. Certain that his secret would not be discovered by any indifferent person, his heart assured him that Laura would not fail to recognize the sounds of that lute on which love had conferred such celebrity. The boat stopped under her window; the night was dark, the air sultry, and the reeds motionless; profound silence pervaded the river, the fields, and the castle. It was the season of sleep or of dangerous reveries which forbid its enjoyment. Petrarch durst not sing; but seizing his lute with transport, he expressed the agitation of his soul in a harmonious prelude. Never did the sudden and impassioned inspirations of love and genius produce more enchanting melody; every note spoke. It was a language at once intelligible, novel and heavenly. The window opened.

member that your decisions in this place have often crowned minstrels less pure and lovers less constant and generous."

When I had finished speaking, a profound silence pervaded the assembly for a few minutes, but I could perceive by the expression of every face that my defence was satisfactory. The question of guilty or not was put to the vote, and I was unanimously acquitted. In this verdict my accuser herself, the amiable Aloise de Bauffremont, had the generous equity to concur. Greeted with universal plaudits, I quitted the court with a joy and satisfaction equal to the apprehension and anxiety with which I had entered it. I wrote the same day to my sister informing her of my triumph, certain that she would immediately communicate the intelligence to the Countess de Foix. I then thought of nothing but seeking a hermitage for myself; at

length I found this, and here I fixed my abode. In this place I have passed a melancholy exile, but have never experienced a single moment of *ennui*. Is it possible to feel lonely with love, the muses, the woods, verdure and flowers?

The young troubadour here finished his narrative. Petrarch warmly thanked him for his confidence. The minstrel's story had interested him the more deeply as he was acquainted with one of the heroines; he had been more than once, at Avignon, in company with the beautiful Hermione, Viscountess de Sault, whom he could not behold with indifference, as she was a relative of Laura's and the friend of Ermessenda. Petrarch passed the night at the hermitage, and did not quit it the following day, till he had promised to pay frequent visits to it during his residence at Lombes. A few days afterwards, Petrarch, doom-



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aged elm, which stood on the bank of the river. A company of young peasants had during the whole evening been dancing under this tree, where they were still assembled: they surrounded the supposed minstrel and questioned him with kind curiosity. He introduced himself under his borrowed name; and as the rain suddenly ceased, he began to sing *the Complaint of Agnes*, composed by Roger, and accompanied it upon his immortal lute. Though it was by this time quite dark, the enchanted peasants did not return to their homes till they had heard the last stanza. Petrarch desired to be conducted to the neighbouring cottage of a fisherman, and there having expressed a wish to make an excursion on the river, a boatman offered to attend him, on condition that he should be detained no longer than three quarters of an hour. Petrarch took his lute and embarked with deep emotion;

he ordered the boatman to steer towards the angle of the mansion in which Laura's chamber was situated. Certain that his secret would not be discovered by any indifferent person, his heart assured him that Laura would not fail to recognize the sounds of that lute on which love had conferred such celebrity. The boat stopped under her window; the night was dark, the air sultry, and the reeds motionless; profound silence pervaded the river, the fields, and the castle. It was the season of sleep or of dangerous reveries which forbid its enjoyment. Petrarch durst not sing; but seizing his lute with transport, he expressed the agitation of his soul in a harmonious prelude. Never did the sudden and impassioned inspirations of love and genius produce more enchanting melody; every note spoke. It was a language at once intelligible, novel and heavenly. The window opened.



Petrarch leaped upon the bank ; the profound darkness prevented him from discerning the features of the adored face he so was desirous to see, but his imagination pourtrayed them : he beheld Laura agitated and affected, timidly seeking to obtain a sight of him, and unable to express her sentiments except by tears which he fancied he felt dropping upon his bosom. An orange branch, covered with perfumed flowers, fell upon him ; he pressed it to his heart, which thrilled when he heard the slight rustling of paper ; it informed him that a letter was attached to this precious branch. The window instantly closed ; this was the order for his departure. Petrarch obeyed it with a sigh, consoled nevertheless by the ardent desire of returning to the fisherman's hut, that he might have an opportunity of reading the letter—the first letter from Laura—the most interesting paper he had ever

possessed. Notwithstanding his strong impatience, the time occupied in their return seemed short. His eyes could not distinguish one of the letters traced on the mysterious paper, but his mind was busy in divining the few words which it might contain ; for there had not been time to write more than a single line. What then could be that expression which fixed his destiny ? The terms which naturally occurred to his imagination were so impassioned, that he was well aware the gentle and modest Laura could not have employed them ; but upon altering the expressions he weakened the ideas : the problem was to discover whatever is most tender and most delicate in the language of love, and before he reached the hut he had composed in his mind more than a hundred notes, but forgot them all in the felicity of perusing the real one, which, hastily written with pencil by a trembling hand, was

ed to survive all that he loved, received the painful tidings of the sudden death of his venerable instructor, Father Denis, for whom he wrote this epitaph :—" Among the ancients, he would have been an extraordinary character; in the present age he was a man."

It is, indeed, evident from Petrarch's letters, that this virtuous ecclesiastic combined with the most inflexible austerity of the principles of religion, all the indulgence enjoined by the Gospel not for sins but for the sinner. It was a general notion in those times, that toleration could not be practised except in regard to persons, and that it would be the most dangerous of inconsistencies to extend it to precepts, because in morals every thing is positive, absolute, and necessary.

Meanwhile the autumn passed away; and towards the end of October, Petrarch received a letter from Isoarda,

informing him that she was about to take a journey on which she should be absent six weeks. Petrarch, fearing that there would now be no channel through which he could hear of Laura, resolved to set out for Avignon without delay. Having taken leave of the bishop and his two friends, Socrates and Lelius, he went to bid farewell to the young troubadour, Roger de Mâchault, who had another year to spend in his hermitage. These two poets, both of them enthusiastic lovers, mutually conceived the warmest friendship for each other while conversing on the passion that engrossed their hearts—so speedily do we become attached to those whose way of thinking and whose sentiments accord with our own! They vowed at parting an everlasting friendship, and promised to send one another their poetical compositions. Petrarch, filled with romantic ideas, which were exalted

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still more by the conversation of Roger, conceived an extraordinary project which he also put in execution. He resolved to realize the chimeras which had so often plunged him into the most delicious reveries, by actually strolling about the environs of the castle where Laura resided ; for he knew that it would be six weeks before she returned to Avignon. Isoarda had always prevented him from visiting this castle, even in the absence of Ermessenda ; but he possessed an accurate plan of it, all the details of which Isoarda had explained to him ; and there was an inscription in Petrarch's hand-writing on the window of Laura's bed-chamber. This chamber was situated on the first floor, at one of the corners of the building ; it overlooked the country, and all that separated it from a branch of the river, which ran beneath the windows, was a very nar-

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spot, she yesterday plighted her faith to another—she is married !” Overwhelmed by this intelligence, Petrarch sunk into one of the chairs ranged in a semicircle in the middle of the chapel. The tender Hermione could not refrain from sympathizing in the pangs of disappointed love ; she went up to Petrarch and seated herself beside him. “ Accuse not Laura,” said she, “ neither her tears, nor her despair, nor my intreaties, could move the haughty Ermessenda. Menaced with a mother’s malediction, Laura was compelled to yield to a tyrannical decree ; she has sacrificed herself to her duty ; it is now yours to avoid whatever would disturb that tranquillity which virtue will certainly restore to her, and to submit with resignation to your lot.”—“ So then,” said Petrarch, “ I have been doomed to feel in the space of a few short hours all the transports of an intoxicating, a

boundless joy, and all the pangs of the keenest anguish! 'Tis like bringing the whole of human life into so small a compass. The rest of my days will be marked only by the overwhelming monotony of disappointment and hopeless sorrow."—As he uttered these words, he covered his face with both his hands to hide the tears which he strove in vain to repress. "At any rate," rejoined Hermione, "you are still beloved, and bitter is the regret that is felt on your account." "And as for you, Madam," replied Petrarch, "you may continue to cherish hope; the man whom you love is yet free." At these words, Hermione made several enquiries concerning Roger; Petrarch was not then capable of answering; but he promised to write to her circumstantially in a few days. Hermione left him, and the page immediately returned to conduct him back from the castle. As he passed the

cushions, Petrarch shuddered. "Gracious heaven," he exclaimed, "it was here that my rival received the hand of Laura, and it was here too that I passed such delicious moments! . . . Great God!" continued he, dropping on his knees before the altar, "my transient dreams of happiness are for ever dispelled; I am resigned to my melancholy destiny, but let me alone suffer; restore peace of mind to Laura, and let her innocent life, agitated by a tempest, soon recover its wonted calmness!"—Having offered up this prayer, Petrarch felt that under the severest misfortunes, pious resignation, which is the most virtuous employment of strength and courage, is also a primary and powerful consolation. He rose, followed his guide, and hastily quitted the chapel and the castle. He returned to the cottage where he had left his horse, and set out at day-break for Avignon: he remained in

that city only twenty-four hours, called upon none of his friends there, but proceeded to Vacluse. How changed appeared that retreat, on which himself, his love, and his productions, had conferred celebrity ! Sorrow embittered all the enchanting recollections which he had left behind ; the fountain was stripped of all its charms, the laurels planted by his hand only reminded him of the past illusions of an unfortunate passion, and the ideas of a glory without aim, and which had lost all its value. He no longer derived inspiration from them, but it seemed as if fortune had robbed him at once of happiness, hope, and talents. The bark of the trees and the rocks, covered with verses and inscriptions, and upon which the name of Laura was a thousand times repeated, were no longer the depositories and the confidants of his most secret sentiments ; they now presented to his view no-

thing but illusory thoughts and distracting images.

The day after his arrival at Vacluse, Petrarch received a letter from Hermione, containing all the particulars which she had promised to give him. She had long known from report that the Countess de Foix had banished Roger, and when Petrarch sung the *Complaint of Agnes*, one of Hermione's attendants, who had recently entered into her service, having joined the company of the villagers, heard him, and inquired the name of the minstrel. On her return to the castle she warmly expressed the admiration which he had excited. The Viscountess de Sault concluded that Roger, weary of his exile and the severe treatment of the haughty Countess de Foix, had come for her sake to the castle where she was residing, after seeking her in vain at her own. The same letter from Hermione contained an account

which was still more interesting to Petrarch, of all the persecutions to which Laura had been subjected by the imperious Ermessenda. How bitterly did he curse the pride and ambition which cost him so dear, and of which Laura was the victim! . . . He answered Hermione with the intention of keeping up her passion for Roger. With all the delicacy which it was necessary to employ in those times with females, to avoid wounding their pride, he intimated that when Roger should learn that he was not forgotten, he would not hesitate to return to her, and that he would undertake the task of bringing them together again. Accordingly he wrote immediately to Roger, but the answer of the latter left him no hope of succeeding. Roger still adored the Countess de Foix, and declared to Petrarch that this hapless passion would not cease but with his life.



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The day after his arrival  
Petrarch received a letter  
mione, containing all  
which she had procured  
She had long known  
the Countess de  
Roger, and whose eyes are exhausted  
*Complaint of*, my hand is weary of  
attendants, and my heart is con-  
into her care and grief."

company that sorrows, fatigue itself is a  
and inclination. Petrarch was more tran-  
On the 1st and less miserable, when his  
warriors, alarmed for his health, brought  
he to him at Vacluse the most eminent  
S physician of that day in Europe, and  
whose fame has been transmitted to  
our time. This was Jean Dondi, son  
of Jaques Dondi, a celebrated mecha-  
nician. He was not less distinguished  
for wit and general information, than  
for professional knowledge. A warm

*AND LAURA.*  
*the interesting*  
Petrarch, he knew his son-  
est songs by heart; and  
with enthusiasm, he  
rouse Petrarch's  
a to restore him to  
poetry was to effect his  
Petrarch ceased to be insensible  
glory of having all the civilized  
ons for his confidants, and of see-  
ing all Europe listening to his lays,  
and sympathising in his sorrows. He  
again took up his neglected lute; he  
drew from it sounds more touching  
than ever, and soothed his grief by  
pouring forth immortal plaints.

Dondi passed some months in his  
society, and at his departure, advised  
him to travel, but Petrarch was de-  
tained at Vacluse, and afterwards at  
Avignon, by events of which he wait-  
ed to see the upshot.

Italy was convulsed by a new revo-  
lution. The want of fixed principles  
always produces inconsistency. Rienzi

had openly declared against the nobility. His envious, violent, and haughty disposition, and his domineering spirit, had revealed to him all the secrets of demagogue imposture and seduction—in short, all the anti-social ideas, the pretended novelty of which, upwards of four centuries later, excited so much astonishment and admiration. Rienzi, the enemy and persecutor of the nobility, stripped them of their titles and armorial distinctions, and yet made his son a knight. On the most frivolous pretexts he deprived all the great lords of their possessions, the best part of which he appropriated to himself, notwithstanding the contempt of wealth which he affected. He had declaimed with vehemence against luxury, and now he never appeared in public but in garments covered with precious stones : and after exhausting all the flatteries of popularity, he had a throne erected for

himself, upon which he received ambassadors and gave audiences.

The Romans at length, weary of his insolence and oppression, rose in arms against him. He was obliged to seek safety in flight, but was apprehended, conveyed to Avignon, and delivered up to the Pope, who ordered him to be confined in the prison of that city. A tribunal was appointed to try him, and it was the universal opinion that he would be sentenced to die. Petrarch, by his virtues and his talents, had conferred such lustre on the title of poet, that he contributed most powerfully to save Rienzi, by persuading his judges that he could write beautiful verses. This innocent untruth which was warmly supported by Petrarch, produced a general sensation in favour of Rienzi.

It is right, nay it is our duty sometimes to break with a guilty friend; but if he is in imminent danger, the

rupture, however justifiable in other respects, would be but a cowardly desertion. The perilous situation of the object to which we have been attached is a sacred bond which suspends or silences every feeling of indignation. Petrarch repaired to Avignon as soon as he was informed of the detention of Rienzi; the fear of displeasing the Pope and the cardinals, and the family of the Colonnas, for whom he felt such admiration and affection, had no influence on his conduct. Not confining himself to open solicitations in behalf of Rienzi, he had the courage to write, without any concealment, to the people of Rome, representing that for the sake of their dignity alone, they ought to protect him whom they had honoured with the title of their tribune, in the extremity to which he was reduced. This extraordinary proceeding, so far from injuring Petrarch, extorted the admi-

ration of the very persons who might naturally have felt offended by it. His letter was eloquent, it expressed the most generous sentiments, and raised his reputation to the highest pitch ; for public opinion never separated from his literary glory that which was due to his virtues. The people of those times believed that magnanimity was not less an attribute of genius than intelligence, penetration, and the faculty of creating. The Pope did not merely commend the generous boldness of Petrarch, but offered him the post of his chief secretary, an honourable and lucrative office. Petrarch assured the sovereign pontiff of the profound gratitude which such unexpected liberality and kindness could not but excite in his heart; but he replied that he had dedicated his life to the muses and to solitude, and therefore declined the favour with equal firmness and respect. Petrarch en-

joyed this triumph the more, as it was witnessed by Laura, who had returned to Avignon with her husband. Petrarch was equally afraid and anxious to see her ; at length they met ; their emotion was probably mutual, yet Petrarch's alone was perceptible. Nature has decreed that the real glory of a sex, which is not formed to govern or command, should spring from virtue and the interesting charm of gentleness and sensibility : she has made the power of woman to consist in grace, and her dignity, as well as her strength and her defence, in that bashful modesty which never appears but under the ingenuous aspect of timidity. But what courage is not that noble sentiment which enjoins us to conceal the secret of our hearts and to shun the object of our love, capable of imparting ! and how supreme is its ascendancy ! How often has modesty confounded the utmost audacity of

vice itself! More authoritative than severe language, it represses the transports of a guilty passion; more impressive than beauty it eternises virtuous love.

Laura, still beauteous as ever, had nevertheless lost that resplendent bloom, which violent grief so speedily takes away. Her eyes, still worthy of the charming verses which they had inspired were no longer those of Laura of Noves; the wife of the Count de Sades had a different look; those eyes still so beautiful for their form and size, and of a colour so soft and pure, now expressed only a melancholy serenity, and that kind of composure which reason rising triumphant over acute affliction at length imparts! Thus after a vehement tempest, at the very time when the clouds are disappearing on the horizon, a light vapour again covers the sky and diminishes the lustre of its brilliant azure. Pe-



trarch did not dissemble the inexpressible emotion with which he surveyed Laura. What a melancholy charm did he find in her delicate paleness! It was the only trace left in her of a love so tender and so unfortunate; but yet, the whole expression of her countenance, though absolutely changed, was just what it ought to be in her new situation. Petrarch could still admire her; that was one consolation, which his great soul was capable of appreciating, in spite of the keenness of his grief and regret.

Petrarch never quitted Avignon during the trial of Rienzi, which terminated in an act of clemency equally unexpected and extraordinary. The Pope not only pardoned him, but sent him back to Rome with the title of senator. The pontiff ventured to rely on the influence of kindness, and that of the severe lessons given by adversity; he knew not that the ambitious

are always ungrateful, and that misfortune, so far from improving haughty minds and violent dispositions, serves only to sour and exasperate them. The events which followed were far from answering any of the expectations which the Pope had a just right to form; however, universal admiration was the price of his generosity, and what sovereign worthy of a throne can repent of having availed himself of the fairest prerogative of his elevated rank, that of pardoning—the only occasion on which he is justified in the exercise of a power superior to the law! Clemency, especially in the case of personal injuries, is a virtue so divine and so expressly commanded by the gospel, that any temerity in this particular is not to be condemned; the pious and the humane will never confound it with imprudence.

The unlooked-for and almost miraculous return of Rienzi to Rome dis-

heartened all his enemies, revived the spirits of his partizans, gained him a great number of new adherents and caused the astonished people to forget how they had been galled by his tyranny. The vulgar have in all ages admired the audacious man whom fortune favours ; their wonder is always equal to their enthusiasm. Rienzi had occasion for no effort to recover the power which naturally fell undivided into his hands. He employed it for no other purpose than to wreak horrible vengeance, and to gratify a rapacity which knew no bounds ; his conscience, more inexorable than the Romans, persuaded him that it was impossible for his past excesses to be forgotten or forgiven. Remorse without repentance produces an implacable spirit ; it serves only to keep up recollections which wrest from the guilty all hope of pardon. In the generosity of the Roman people Rienzi discover-

ed nothing but the dissimulation of fear : tyrants are pitiless because they judge themselves and believe that they are devoted for ever to public detestation. Their most atrocious crimes are but the desperate acts of a degraded and tortured soul, which has irrevocably renounced the happiness of being beloved. Rienzi thought that he could thenceforward reign by terror alone ; he filled Rome with murders and with blood ; he mistook stupor for submission, and there was nothing to slacken the course of his cruelties. A conspiracy was at length formed against this second Nero ; the insurrection was so sudden and so general, that Rienzi had no time for defensive measures ; he assumed female apparel to facilitate his escape, but was immediately apprehended in the capitol, whither he had fled in this disgraceful disguise. In the capitol, Rienzi, like the first emperor of the Romans, found himself all

heartened all his enemies, rascals, and spirits of his partizans, armies of des- great number of new traitors, on seiz- caused the astonished barbarous usurp- how they had been his blood on the ranny. The vulgar had flowed, that admired the audacious found the execution tune favours; then the tragic fall of a equal to their end, as if the proud ge- occasion for liberty had disdained power which of a victim so abject, into his hands ignominiously dragged no other capitol to the very place where ble ven signed a frightful number of city warrants, and there massacred. science did not put an end to the marvellous and civil wars of Italy which poured several years longer.

Meanwhile Petrarch, who after the capture of Rienzi had left Avignon and returned to Vaucluse, passed the whole winter in that retirement; and Julius, perceiving that he stood in more need than ever of consolation, followed him thither.

His friend went almost  
to the grotto, and there,  
of the fountain, Petrarch  
the verses which he had com-  
the preceding day or during a  
pleas night ; and the latter were by  
no means inferior to the others. Pe-  
trarch no longer mingled, as formerly,  
the plaintive effusions of a restless and  
dissatisfied love, with the lively lays  
of hope ; but the genius that is capa-  
ble of catching every kind of strain,  
can also fix upon one particular spe-  
cies without falling into monotony ;  
and Petrarch, whose mind had con-  
tracted a mournful and melancholy  
tone, was ever new in the depth of his  
ideas and the delicacy of his senti-  
ments. One day Lelius, while listen-  
ing to him, was so transported with ad-  
miration, that he could not help ex-  
claiming that the bard who could so  
sublimely celebrate such a passion,  
had deserved to be better loved. Pe-

trarch insisted that the compliment was unjust. "Ah!" said he, "Laura could not but prefer her duty to me. So far from complaining of her conduct in this particular, I enjoy the consolation of admiring her the more for it. Threatened with a parent's curse, she was obliged to obey or to renounce her mother; it would have been wrong in her even to hesitate. Woe to the rash and headstrong child who sacrifices filial duty and affection at the shrine of love! By yielding to passion Laura would have cancelled the most impressive eulogies that she has received from me; she would have lost the immortality that she owes to my verses. My muse has perhaps produced some harmonious stanzas on her graces and her beauty, but she has also bestowed enthusiastic commendations on her modesty and virtue." "I must confess," replied Lelina, "that Laura would appear more in-

teresting to me, if she felt with equal energy the sentiment which she excites in you."—"No, my friend, energy is not becoming in a female unless when enjoined or approved by virtue. Women have no means of ennobling their natural weakness, but by the gentleness and moderation that enable them to endure with resignation a dependence from which rebellion could not release them. Their most extraordinary acts of self-devotion are not worthy of admiration except when they are heroic and pure; it is only under the guidance of duty that they can by passion confer lustre on their names; accordingly the ancients, who upon the whole had a very delicate sense of decorum, never represented females as interesting and worthy of admiration, unless they were actuated and guided by filial, maternal or conjugal affection; and the love of their country. Such are, in history and fable, the distin-



guished characters of Artemisia, Penelope, Arria, Antigone, Andromache, and Macaria, devoting herself for the welfare of her native land. But all the impassioned votaries of love of whom they have given us any account, are vicious, guilty, and often atrocious. It is in such colours that they delineate Medea, Calypso, Phædra, Circe, and others ; and if we go back to a source still more ancient and more pure, we shall not find in the history of the patriarchs, females worthy of exciting interest giving themselves up without reserve to the transports of love : Sarah, Rachael, Rebecca, Ruth, were not the slaves of passion. In short, the woman whom the Scripture characterizes as strong, was no other than a chaste, laborious, sedentary and obedient wife.”—“ But,” replied Lelius, “ in referring to Pagan antiquity, you have not mentioned two interesting and yet impassioned females, Sappho

and Dido."—"The queen of Carthage, and the Trojan prince," replied Peruch, being both free, were dependent only on themselves. Dido's love is pure and legitimate; Æneas had bought her his faith, so that she may be placed in the class of unfortunate ones. Sappho immortalized herself by her verses alone. You know, as well as I, that her manners disgraced her character and reputation. Let us then require the reciprocity of that petuous love which is formed for ourselves alone. Women are angelic creatures when they fulfil their destiny; powerful emotions of the soul do not forbid them, but they are expected not to profane them, and they are not authorized to throw off that reserve which is their characteristic, except to become sublime."

Ælius admitted that these ideas respecting women were perfectly just, that this judgment was at the same

time the panegyric most worthy of the sex. Petrarch, in expressing his opinions, had more particularly designed to justify the character and sentiments of Laura; and Lelius was not a real confidant and comforter to him, except when he found that he shared that admiration for her which he himself felt.

The two friends, in this profound seclusion, did not find a single moment hang heavy on their hands. Equally fond of study, their occupations and pursuits incessantly furnished new subjects for conversation. The world can afford nothing to be compared to the pleasures of that friendship, which unites the communication of the sentiments with that of the ideas; the instructive reading and the reflexions of two persons influenced by the same virtuous principles, and of correspondent dispositions. It is doubling life to pass it in this manner; not a moment of it is lost.

In yielding to the irresistible charms which poetry had for him, Petrarch did not neglect more serious occupations; he composed in Latin, moral dialogues, in which we frequently find the imagination of a poet, the sound reason of a sage, and the most religious sentiments. Thus in one of his dialogues (the fifth, entitled, "*On the ignorance of Ourselves*"), addressing the Supreme Being, he says:—

"O thou whose all-seeing eye, embracing the expanse of heaven and the whole universe, discerns at the same time the most secret thoughts of all creatures; incomprehensible intelligence, before whom all human knowledge is as nothing; thou knowest, O Lord, that the sole aim of my life is the hope that with thine aid I shall attain wisdom; thou knowest that amid the illusions of youth, of love, and the passion for glory, there

never was a moment of my life when I would not rather, had the choice been left to myself, have become acceptable in thy sight, than reached the summit of human attainments." It was thus that religion, by exalting his exquisite genius, supported and animated him in his studies, and consoled him under his sorrows.

Towards the conclusion of this winter, Petrarch received a visit, which, so far from disturbing his solitude, heightened its pleasures. The friend who was as dear to him as Lelius, and to whom he had given the name of Socrates, came to spend a month with him. This young man, who had been left heir to a considerable fortune, and was a passionate lover of the arts, devoted the first moments of liberty afforded by his newly acquired wealth, to a tour in Italy. Petrarch was astonished at seeing him arrive, according to his ancient custom, on foot, with no

rather attendant than his dog, and carrying himself all his baggage, consisting of three changes of linen. "What, dear Socrates," said Petrarch, "now that you are rich, do you not relinquish the habits which poverty led you to adopt?"—"No," replied Socrates, "because those habits will prove to me blessings which wealth cannot bestow: health, bodily strength, personal independence. Fortune is constant; I love to defy her changes; if she should take from me what she has recently bestowed, I shall find means to dispense without inconvenience with all her favours." "But how will you employ your wealth?"—"In relieving the unfortunate, in serving my friends, in giving them a hearty welcome, and affording them in my house all the comforts they desire, and lastly, in cultivating the fine arts, and patronizing neglected or persecuted talents."—"You in-

tend, then, to keep a fine house, a great number of servants and horses?" — "Certainly, but without ostentation, and merely for the sake of others. As for myself, I shall scrupulously preserve, as long as I live, the simplicity to which I am happily accustomed. I shall enjoy the advantage of being at all times and in all situations capable of supplying my own wants, independent of any servant, and able to dispense cheerfully with a good lodging, good cheer, a down bed, a carriage, and all the superfluities which effeminacy terms necessities. I will ennoble my past poverty, by despising all that I was not possessed of and I will strengthen by exercise all the faculties that I have received from nature. Thus I am setting out alone and on foot, with my dog and my knapsack, on a tour through all Italy; I shall spend no money except in the towns, in charitable donations and in

purchase of pictures and statues. In this manner I shall double the value which has devolved to me ; I shall never derive new pleasure from possession ; it shall never make me effeminate ; and then if I should lose it, I shall have no cause for regret." Petrarch admired this kind of philosophy, and he found that he had fully deserved the eminence which he had given him.

In the first days of spring, Socrates set out, agreeably to the intention which he had announced, for Italy ; he returned to Lombes, and Petrarch was left alone at Vacluse. He would fain have visited Italy in company with his friend, for though he had not been recalled to Florence, his true place, he might have gone to any of the other cities of that beautiful country : and he had a strong desire to see Rome, where he had never yet been ; but he was summoned to Ger-



many by the Emperor, and was under a promise to repair to his court. He was ready to depart in the month of July, when a dreadful epidemic disease, which had broken out at Avignon and spread over all the adjacent country, filled him with the utmost alarm, because Laura, since her marriage, had resided in that place, in the summer as well as winter. An extraordinary drought and intense heat parched up the fields, and carried death into almost every house. The small district of Vaucluse alone had been hitherto exempted from this public calamity; but Petrarch did not hesitate to leave it, and fly to Avignon to enquire after the health of Laura. He was there informed, that in the absence of the Count de Sades, who would be from home for several months, Ermessenda had taken Laura to her castle. A few days afterwards Petrarch learned, in a manner which

left no room for doubt, that Laura was attacked by the first symptoms indicative of the prevailing epidemic. The skilful Dondi, the celebrated physician and the friend of Petrarch, of whom mention has been made above, was at Avignon; and being summoned by Ermessenda, he prepared to set out to attend Laura, whom Petrarch's poems rendered so interesting in his estimation. Petrarch, more agitated and alarmed than ever, resolved to return, under the name of Roger, to the vicinity of Ermessenda's castle; he acquainted Dondi with his intention. They both set out at the same time taking different roads. Petrarch repaired to the house of the fisherman where he had lodged during his first visit to that part of the country. He was joyfully received, for the name of Roger was not yet forgotten there. The physician went privately to the cottage; he informed him that Laura

was certainly very ill, but in no danger, and he hoped that in a few days she would be convalescent.

Petrarch had brought with him his lute ; that beloved lute, which Laura's hand had once crowned at Vaucluse, was his inseparable companion. To play upon that instrument was not to him an ordinary amusement ; that lute, on which he composed such affecting melodies, was the harmonious interpreter of all his feelings. Two days afterwards, Petrarch was again thrown into the utmost alarm respecting the state of Laura. The physician acknowledged that the disease had assumed the most dangerous appearance. The faithful Isoarda, who arrived the preceding day at the castle, was attending her ; friendship rendered her regardless of the risk she ran of taking the dreadful infection. How Petrarch envied her the opportunity of giving such affecting proofs of attachment ! Re-

solving to entrust her with his secret, he wrote to entreat her to grant him a private interview ; and his letter bespoke such violent affliction, that Isoarda had not the firmness to refuse. She appointed him to meet her the very same evening at a particular spot in the park. A servant of Isoarda's whom he found at one of the private doors, conducted him into a dark alley of elm-trees, where in a few minutes he was joined by her disconsolate mistress. At the sight of one another they both burst into tears. "Ah !" said Isoarda, in accents broken by her sobs, " every moment increases the danger ; she has fallen into a stupor from which nothing can rouse her."—" Gracious heaven," cried Petrarch, " is it a lethargy ?"—" No, but all her strength is gone : alas ! she has long lost it. Her virtue, her reason had finally triumphed over her secret sorrows ; but she has suffered much, very much.

She is in a state of debility which seems to be irremediable: grief, whose bitterest pangs she has felt, has exhausted her constitution, and, like an expiring taper, she sinks beneath them at the age of twenty-five. We shall lose her." At these dreadful words, Petrarch wildly declared that he was determined to see her, and to die with her. Isoarda exerted all her strength to detain him. During this struggle, the physician came up. Petrarch questioned him with tremulous anxiety. "It would answer no purpose to dissuade," replied he: "unless some favourable crisis rouses her in the course of the night from this state of stupor and insensibility, she will not survive to-morrow." At this fatal intelligence, the distracted Petrarch threw himself at Isoarda's feet, imploring her to permit him to see Laura. While he was speaking with all the vehemence of deep despair, Dondi

was reflecting in silence. Suddenly interrupting his friend, "It is not impossible," said he, "to gratify you : Ermessenda is herself ill and confined to her bed ; Isoarda may send Laura's attendants out of the way ; and I will undertake to introduce you into her apartment, if you will promise to obey all my directions."—"Yes, I swear it."—"Well, go and fetch your lute."—"My lute ! O heavens ! . . . ."  
"Yes ; if there be yet any emotion that can penetrate to her heart, we will save her."—"Gracious God ! . . . ."  
—"Take my horse which stands ready saddled in the stable ; lose no time : you will be back in less than three quarters of an hour."—"Will you answer for her life during that interval?"—"I will."—At these words Petrarch instantly ran off, proceeded to the stable, mounted the horse, which he urged to his full speed, fetched his lute, and returned in half

an hour. At the moment when he was delivering the horse to a groom, a doleful sound suddenly struck his ear : it proceeded from the village bell. It was then ten o'clock. Scarcely breathing, and not daring to ask a single question, he shuddered on hearing the groom pronounce with tears these terrible words: " It tolls for the Countess de Sades, who is dying." The unhappy Petrarch, without uttering a syllable, hastened to the castle. He entered without hindrance ; the afflicted servants seemed to have lost their wits ; and such was their consternation, that they took no notice of what was passing around them. However, a servant of Isoarda's, who had been directed to wait for and to introduce Petrarch, perceived him when he was ascending the stairs, and conducted him into an apartment, where he found the physician, whose gloomy look raised his anguish to the

highest pitch. "Is it over?" said he, in heart-rending accents. "She yet lives," replied the physician, "but her last moment seems to be near at hand. Nevertheless it is not impossible that a sudden revolution might rally her declining strength. Have you sufficient firmness to play on the lute and to sing to it?"—"Give me but a ray of hope and I can do any thing."—"Come on, then." So saying, the physician took Petrarch by the hand and hastily conducted him to the chamber of the patient, who was at this moment attended by Isoarda alone. Petrarch, bathed in tears, shuddered as he approached. His heart was ready to break as he surveyed that adored face, which the impress of death seemed but to render more moving and more angelic. Her extreme paleness added an interesting charm to the regularity of her features, and motionless as she lay, she appeared



a beauteous image of innocence and celestial repose. The physician went up to her; he endeavoured to make the patient inhale a spirituous water; and at the same time he desired Petrarch to play and sing one of the sonnets which he had composed for Laura. Petrarch fell on his knees, and sung, with a supernatural pathos, the first verses that he made for Laura, who he knew preferred them to all the others. About the middle of the second stanza, Laura moved; Petrarch, whose gaze was stedfastly fixed upon her, continued with all the transports of love and hope. Laura all at once opened her eyes, saying distinctly, "*O, Petrarch!*"—"She is saved!" exclaimed the physician; the lute dropped from Petrarch's hands, and Isoarda embraced him with rapture. Overcome with excessive emotion and joy, Petrarch swooned; the physician caught him in his arms, carried him

into an adjoining closet, and directed Isoarda to assist him, while he returned to his patient. In a short time he came back, at the moment when Petrarch was regaining his senses. He soon brought him to himself, by declaring that he would answer for the recovery of Laura. The happy Petrarch would have thrown himself at his feet to thank him for the intelligence. "It is yourself who have done it all," said the physician, "I take no credit but for having reckoned upon this miracle; your lute and your lays, more worthy than ever of immortality, have recalled to life the virtuous object of a passion so pure and so touching. I have left Laura to the care of her women, whom I have directed what they are to do: she is asking for her friend; Isoarda go to her; I will be with you in a few minutes." Isoarda instantly flew to Laura's chamber, the door of which she

took care to fasten. The physician being left alone with Petrarch, briefly reminded him of the promise he had given to obey all his directions, and urged him to leave the castle immediately. Petrarch obtained permission to remain a quarter of an hour longer till the physician had seen Laura again, and could bring back to him a confirmation of the hope of a complete recovery. The physician quitted him. Petrarch being left alone, approached the door, and listened with equal agitation and attention to what was passing in the chamber. What were his feelings when he heard the sweet voice of Laura utter these words : “ *No, it was not an illusion ; there is his lute !* ” At this moment the door opened : Isoarda appeared, with joy beaming from her face. In her hand she held the lute, which she delivered to Petrarch, saying : “ Take back this lute, the saviour of Laura’s life, and which is

bedewed with her tears." Petrarch received it with transport ; he pressed it to his heart, renewing the vow which he had formerly made never to part from it. Isoarda intreated him to leave the castle without delay ; he complied, but went to pass the night in a neighbouring farm-house, that he might receive intelligence from hour to hour concerning Laura. At day-break he received a note from Isoarda to this effect :—" Be perfectly easy, she is out of all danger ; an inextinguishable recollection, a powerful and magic voice, have snatched her from the brink of the grave. She requires you, as the strongest proof of attachment, to return this very day to Vaucluse, to rest there for some days, and then to travel till next summer. Farewell ; and if you should sometimes sigh in secret over the inflexible austerity of virtue, consider that its power does not ex-

tend to recollections, and that it never will produce forgetfulness."

Petrarch felt the full value of the concluding words of this note, which he bathed with his tears. In his answer he promised implicit obedience, and instantly quitted the farm-house; but he stopped for that day and the following night at the fisherman's hut, that he might hear for twenty-four hours longer how Laura was going on. At length, completely cheered up again, and as happy as he could be in his situation, he set out on his return to Vacluse.

At the conclusion of the second day, night and a violent storm obliged him to seek shelter in a castle which he came to in his road. It belonged to an aged widow lady, named Mabile, who had been confined for nearly half a century to this ancient castle by grief for the loss of her husband, and still more by her infirmities. The

aunt and guardian of the beautiful Orphania, now eighteen years of age, she had brought up that young female, an orphan from her cradle, in this seclusion. Mabile, who scarcely ever received visits, had retained little belonging to the world in which she had lived in her youth, but some ideas of chivalrous gallantry, which gave to her conversation a tone that was singular at her age. Petrarch, still retaining the name of Roger, solicited hospitality, which she was delighted to afford to a troubadour, for she recollected that she had once been extremely fond of music and singing. She gave a hearty welcome to Petrarch, who found her alone with Orphania, with whose beauty he was the more struck, on account of the deep melancholy impressed upon her countenance. Mabile opened the conversation with a dissertation on love, friendship and poetry. Petrarch could not forbear smiling more than once at

her romantic gossip. When she had exhausted her stock of common-place ideas, she requested him to play a tune on his lute ; and Petrarch, to keep up his assumed character of troubadour, first sung *The Complaint of Agnes* ; but afterwards, burning with desire to repeat the sonnet which had revived the dying Laura, he said that he would sing some verses of Petrarch's. Orphania rose, and, under the pretext of oppressive heat, opened one of the windows, and sat down in such a manner as to be concealed by the curtains. Petrarch, beholding in imagination the person of Laura at the moment of her revival, began the sonnet. The subject and the sound of his own voice produced in him such deep emotion, that the sentiment which engrossed his whole soul could not but be contagious. Mabile listened with an agitation and astonishment to which she was a stranger. When he had finished, she asked

her niece what she thought of the song she had just heard. She repeated the question without obtaining any answer; and as she could not walk without the assistance of crutches, she requested Petrarch to draw back the curtain. Petrarch obeyed, and was extremely surprised to find Orphania bathed in tears, and in the attitude of a person overwhelmed with grief. She instantly rose, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief, and abruptly left the room. Petrarch, quite disconcerted, went up to Mabile and expressed his astonishment. The old lady, charmed with the polished manners, the respectful behaviour, the good sense and accomplishments of the supposed troubadour, burned with desire to communicate to him an extraordinary secret; but first of all she enquired if he was acquainted with the celebrated poet, the author of the sonnet which he had been singing? Petrarch replied with a smile that



he knew something of him. At these words, Mabile exclaimed that his coming was evidently a dispensation of Providence. She desired him to take a seat beside her, and told him that she would reveal to him an important secret. She then related that the thoughtful and melancholy Orphania, captivated by the poems and the reputation of Petrarch, had, though he was a stranger to her, conceived an invincible passion for him, which had attained the highest pitch of violence since the marriage of Laura. "Till then I opposed it," continued her aunt; "but now that hope revives and supports her, I can resist no longer; I have myself but too well known the power of love to require the sacrifice of a real passion. I possess a large fortune; Orphania is my only heiress; I am myself one of Petrarch's warmest admirers; anxious for the happiness of my niece, I would joyfully unite her to the man who has

treated of love in a way and in strains that have never been equalled. I request you therefore to undertake the negociation of this business ; expatiate to him on the sentiments, the youth, the beauty, and the understanding of Orphania ; tell him that with all the advantages attached to her birth and fortune she might aspire to a high alliance, but that both herself and I prefer personal merit to the empty distinctions which dazzle the vulgar." This address, delivered with emphasis, deeply moved Petrarch ; he compared Ermessenda with Mabile, and could not suppress the painful reflexion, that if the former had thought thus, he should have been the happiest of men. After a moment's silence, he replied : " I feel myself, madam, as much affected as honoured by the confidence you have been pleased to repose in me ; but I know so much of Petrarch as to be able to assure you that his heart will never

change, but will continue to adore Laura till his latest breath. His love is so tender and so constant, that he can dispense with hope. It is by the expression of a sentiment in which there is nothing vulgar, that he has gained such an ascendancy over the pure soul of Orphania ; he would be no longer worthy of the preference which she bestows on him, if he could cease to love her whom he has thus celebrated. Petrarch, were he inconstant, would lose all his genius ; the fame which seduces you belongs solely to the bard of Laura, and that title alone can secure it to him."

Mabille admired this answer, which so closely corresponded with her own romantic way of thinking ; still she persisted in her request ; but Petrarch positively refused to undertake the commission with which she was desirous to entrust him. He sincerely pitied the fair Orphania ; and to avoid

seeing her again, he determined to set out next morning at day-break, notwithstanding the importunity of his hostess, who entreated him to remain with her a few days. Orphania did not appear during the rest of the evening, and before she had risen in the morning he had resumed his journey.

He beheld Vaocluse again with feelings very different from those with which he had left it : the ancient recollections which it revived, though still painful, were less pungent ; nay, sometimes he experienced a melancholy pleasure in recalling them to his mind. He had given to Laura fresh proofs of the most faithful attachment ; he had received an assurance and acquired the certainty that she could not forget him ; and he reflected with rapture, that he had too much reason to be satisfied with love to complain of fortune. “ As the fire,” said he, “ lies dormant in flint, and neither warms it

nor shows itself till a violent collision obliges it to appear, so the affection which she feels for me, concentrated in her soul, can only be elicited by extraordinary events and in extraordinary situations. In that dreadful state in which all her intellectual faculties were paralysed, reflection and the idea of duty could not operate on her; the instinct of sentiment alone was left, and I saw the thrill produced by the first sounds of the lute and by the voice that celebrated our loves. The use of her senses and of her reason was suspended; she lived but in her soul, which alone retained its faculties, and that angelic soul heard the accents of mine and answered it. Thus at that moment, which I shall never forget, Laura was wholly mine, and that celestial union recalled her to life." These soothing ideas, allaying the vehemence of his anguish, imparted a new and affecting interest to his natural melancholy and his long reveries.

A few days after his arrival at Vau-

cluse, he received a letter from Isoarda, informing him that Laura, now convalescent, had quitted her bed, and would soon be sufficiently recovered to return to Avignon. Petrarch waited till her arrival in that city before he would commence his travels; and when he was at length assured of her perfect cure, he set out for Germany. He proceeded to Prague, where the Emperor was then engaged in drawing up the celebrated Golden Bull. That prince received him at his court with all the distinction that power combined with a love of the arts is capable of bestowing on genius and talent. At this court Petrarch met with an eminent lawyer named Bartholo, with whom he had long corresponded by letter. He passed three months in Germany, and then repaired to France. Petrarch was persuaded that a poet cannot be perfect without acquiring every species of knowledge and without travelling.

He was as warmly welcomed at the court of France as he had been at Prague. He beheld with admiration a king full of frankness, honour and integrity;\* and a prince who in the turbulent times which followed, obtained and deserved upon the throne the surname of *the wise*;† and lastly the princess Jane of Bourbon, the enlightened friend and patroness of the arts and sciences.‡

Petrarch was detained some time at Paris by Nicholas Oresme and Pierre le Bercheur, the two most eminent French scholars of that age. At length, loaded with honours and favours by the sovereigns of Germany and France, he returned to Vaucluse. Those who know how to appreciate mental gratifications are easily sated with those of vanity. He returned with delight

\* King John, who was accustomed to say, that "if good faith and truth were banished from the earth, they ought still to take up their abode and to be found in the hearts and in the mouths of Kings."

† Charles V.      ‡ The consort of Charles V.

to his solitude, bringing back with him a more brilliant reputation and fresh stores of knowledge acquired during his travels. He enjoyed all the sweets afforded by study and repose, after the agitation of public life. There is something tumultuous in applause, which fatigues both body and mind ; at the moment of obtaining fame, we have no time to enjoy it, but we relish it in retirement ; when pure and deserved it is particularly delicious in the recollection. Petrarch resumed his favourite occupations, the study of history and of the human heart, the cultivation of poetry and the arts, his correspondence with his friends and especially with Isoarda, who, in all her letters, had something to say concerning Laura. In this manner he passed nearly a whole year without interruption at Vacluse ; his celebrity at length obliged him to remove for a considerable time from that peaceful retreat, in which he took such delight. In the



month of July, by a singular coincidence, he received on the same day two letters, one from Bardi, chancellor of the university of Paris, and the other from the senate of Rome. The first pressed him to repair to Paris to receive the laurel crown, and the other proposed that the same honour should be paid him in the capitol. Not long before Petrarch had received another very flattering letter from Robert, King of Naples, inviting him to his capital. This letter breathed such affectionate kindness, that Petrarch could no otherwise express his gratitude than by accepting the invitation. He resolved therefore to visit Naples before he went to Rome. He did not set out till he had informed Isoarda of all these circumstances so glorious to himself; this was the same thing as acquainting Laura with them.

Being unable to go to Lombes, he wrote a long farewell letter to Lelius, expressing the joy which he felt in the

hope of revisiting his native land ; for he flattered himself, that on his return to Italy with such distinction, the Florentines would recall a citizen who reflected honour on his country by his talents and by such a triumph. In this same letter to Lelius, Petrarch evinced his sincere sorrow for the civil wars which still ravaged Italy, and lamented by anticipation the continual obstacles caused by these dissensions which he should inevitably meet with on his way. He concluded this letter with the following remarkable words : “ For the rest I shall easily discover among the Italians those in whom I may place confidence. I have found, throughout the whole course of my life, that the ties by which men can be most strongly bound together in times of trouble, are the love of their country for good men, and hatred of their country for the wicked.”

At the moment when he was about

to depart, Petrarch was detained by an unexpected visit. Boccacio suddenly arrived at Vacluse, bringing most gratifying and glorious intelligence. He was deputed by the Florentines to acquaint Petrarch with his recall to his country and the restoration of his property. Who could remain insensible to a mark of esteem from his countrymen, even though it were but an act of justice! Petrarch's joy was so great that he immediately determined to delay his visit to Naples and Rome; and to proceed without delay to Florence with Boccacio. The latter agreed to rest two days at Vacluse; and on the evening of the second, Petrarch having closely questioned him respecting his sentiments and situation, Boccacio related to him his adventures in the following terms:—

The first years of my life and youth present nothing of interest. Incessant occupation, a little fame, and nu-

merous crosses, occasioned by the absolute want of fortune, compose the whole of my history till the period when it begins to be interesting. I opposed to my misfortunes the friendship of Petrarch and a strong attachment to poetry, and I endured them with firmness. About two years since, desirous of finishing my *Griselda* without interruption, I fixed my abode in a cottage, situated in the delightful vale of Arno, near Florence. In these odoriferous groves of orange-trees in blossom, I actually found all that can charm a poetic mind, the most beautiful scenery, fountains, streams, and perfumed shades. One evening, in one of my walks, I perceived a handsome detached house, and was much struck with its elegant simplicity. I learned that this charming retreat belonged to a foreign lady, named Ambrosia, a woman of extraordinary beauty though past the prime of

youth, and who resided there in absolute seclusion with a daughter of sixteen, whose name was Fiammetta. This discovery excited my curiosity, and I walked every evening about the habitation of the fair recluses. I inscribed some verses on a plane-tree about ten paces distant from their house, and in a few days observed that all the bark upon which these verses were engraved had been removed from the tree. I derived a vague and confused hope from this trifling incident. I selected another neighbouring tree for the depository of my poetic effusions; I engraved three stanzas upon it; but the bark was so hard and so rough that the delicate hand of a female could not have detached it, at least not without great trouble; and this was what I wished to ascertain. I returned in the evening, and casting my eyes on the tree found that the stanzas, and of course the bark also, had

been removed. On an attentive examination of the tree, I remarked with extreme concern, that the hand which had detached the bark had doubtless received a hurt, for the trunk still exhibited traces of blood. I inscribed upon another tree some fresh stanzas on the presentiments of love, and with my knife cut the bark in such a manner that it remained suspended from the tree by a few fibres only. I then resolved to pass the night on the spot, conceiving that whoever took away the verses did it by stealth early in the morning. I fell asleep on a bank of turf; and being awakened by the dawn, and still more by my restless curiosity, I hastily concealed myself in a myrtle thicket. Scarcely had I taken my station there, when I perceived at a distance, between the branches, a young female more nimble than Atalanta running towards me: the disorder of her fine auburn tresses, and the

negligence of her white dress plainly indicated that she had just risen from bed. By her bloom, her enchanting face, and infantine air, I concluded that she was the young and charming Fiammetta ; I was right in my conjecture. On perceiving that the bark hung loose, she exclaimed : “ How lucky ! to-day I shall not cut myself ! ” As she uttered these words she broke the fibres, took the piece of bark and put it into her bosom. Unable to contain myself any longer, I sprung towards and threw myself at her feet. Her surprise was extreme ; my name escaped her lips ; she eyed me with the kindest expression, and then ran off making a sign to me to retire. I remained fixed to the spot in a state of inexpressible agitation. She had pronounced my name ; she must therefore know that I was in the neighbourhood, and that I had composed the verses which she preserved with so

much care. I supposed, and it really was the case, that pleased with these effusions and wishing to discover the author, she had learned upon enquiry that I resided at the cottage nearest to her house. From that moment I could think of nothing but Fiammetta; I inscribed fresh verses on the bark, which I loosened as I had done the preceding day, and slipped behind it a note containing the most passionate declaration of love; after which I solicited an opportunity to see and speak to her, adding that I would take no steps for that purpose, till I had received her permission and commands. I did not return to the tree at the hour at which I expected her to come and take away the bark, but deferred my visit till the evening. I approached the tree with violent emotion; the bark was gone, and on the spot which it had covered I found written in large letters *The Orchard*.



After some reflexion, I concluded that she had appointed me to meet her in the orchard belonging to her own house, no doubt at the hour at which she was accustomed to steal out every morning. Transported with joy, I thought the rest of the day and the succeeding night insupportably tedious; and I was at the gate of the orchard an hour before the break of day. It began to be light, when the gate, which was next to the fields was softly opened. A girl of fifteen, daughter to the gardener, and the confidante of Fiammetta, put out her head beyond the gate and looked about on every side. I cannot describe my transport on perceiving the innocent face thus engaged. I went up to her saying, 'I am the person you want.' The girl took me by the hand, and I went with her into the orchard. She led me into an alley of sycamore-trees, where I found Fiammetta seated on a

bench. This young female, brought up in absolute solitude, possessed all the frankness of her years. Ambrosia, who was highly accomplished, had instilled into her a fondness for reading and poetry; and my pieces had made a deep impression upon her heart. This she acknowledged without equivocation; and she told me that if I persisted in the sentiments which I manifested towards her, she was determined to reveal the secret to her mother, and to employ all the means in her power to obtain her consent to our union; but, continued she, it is a step which I cannot at present take; my mother has declared to me, that she shall employ herself seriously respecting my establishment, when I shall have attained my seventeenth year, and that till then she would particularly consult my inclination; that at present I ought to preclude myself from every species of enquiry, and maintai-

on this subject the most profound silence. My mother is sensible and good, she loves me tenderly, but *she* requires from me perfect submission: Were I determined on speaking to her before the time prescribed, she would refuse to listen to me, and I should but excite her anger. Let us pause, then; if you remain in your cottage, the secret of our attachment will quickly be discovered. I have consented to give you this meeting, only to inform you that it will be the last. 'Depart; banish yourself; be faithful; and rely upon me.' When Fiammetta had ceased speaking, I remonstrated with her upon the severity of that resolve, which must be a barrier to all correspondence between us during one afflicting year, but Fiammetta was inflexible. I admired the firmness of her character and the originality of her mind, which united at the same time so much imprudence and ingenuity. I

interrogated her respecting her mother: all that I could discover was, that Ambrosia had experienced great misfortunes, that she had dwelt in this solitude more than ten years; that she did not receive the visits of a single individual; that she was strongly inclined to misanthropy; absorbed in sorrow; and that the name of her family and her country were alike unknown.

An hour after this conversation, Fiammetta took leave of me. I embraced the mournful determination of tearing myself away from this delightful valley, which was become so dear to me: but I obtained the promise of a last interview with Sylvia, for that was the name of the young florist, who was on the evening of the same day to bring me the farewell letter of Fiammetta, and to receive mine. I returned to my cottage, impressed with the most tender sentiments that man

on this subject the most profound silence. My mother is sensible and good, she loves me tenderly, but she requires from me perfect submission: Were I determined on speaking to her before the time prescribed, she would refuse to listen to me, and I should but excite her anger. Let us pause, then; if you remain in your cottage, the secret of our attachment will quickly be discovered. I have consented to give you this meeting, only to inform you that it will be the last. 'Depart; banish yourself; be faithful; and rely upon me.' When Fiammetta had ceased speaking, I remonstrated with her upon the severity of that resolve, which must be a barrier to all correspondence between us during one afflicting year, but Fiammetta was inflexible. I admired the firmness of her character and the originality of her mind, which united at the same time so much imprudence and ingenuity. I

interrogated her respecting her mother: all that I could discover was, that Ambrosia had experienced great misfortunes, that she had dwelt in this solitude more than ten years; that she did not receive the visits of a single individual; that she was strongly inclined to misanthropy; absorbed in sorrow; and that the name of her family and her country were alike unknown.

An hour after this conversation, Fiammetta took leave of me. I embraced the mournful determination of tearing myself away from this delightful valley, which was become so dear to me: but I obtained the promise of a last interview with Sylvia, for that was the name of the young florist, who was on the evening of the same day to bring me the farewell letter of Fiammetta, and to receive mine. I returned to my cottage, impressed with the most tender sentiments that man

can feel. When the night was advancing, I hastened to a wood of citron trees, where I found Sylvia already waiting; we hastily exchanged our letters; I immediately flew to my chamber to read that of Fiammetta. Its contents were as follows :

“ The year which must pass away will appear long without doubt, yet shall I not feel its tediousness, for I shall be momentarily employed in dwelling upon the recollections associated with you. I shall muse every morning under the shade of those trees which were the hallowed repository of our early secret. The bark which they yet preserve will have language for me; it will still continue to speak to me, and I shall guess what it would yet say to me could you still confide your thoughts to it. I shall remain tranquil, I shall rely equally upon your heart, and that of a mother whose only wishes are

centered in my happiness—Adieu, rest assured, that in one year you will be recalled to the vale of Arno, and that by the happy Fiammetta.” This letter touched me very deeply, but I was far from sharing the security of Fiammetta respecting the consent of her mother ; for the singularity of Ambrosia’s life occasioned me some disquietude. There was something so mysterious in her conduct and in her situation, that the more I reflected, the better founded my fears appeared. I departed for Florence, I had been there three weeks, when a friend of mine at Naples wrote to me, anxiously entreating me to repair thither, assuring me, at the same time, that King Robert desired it. I felt that glory and fortune might at once remove all the impediments that could be opposed to my union with Fiammetta. I wished to communicate to her this idea, I found a means through the interven-



teem, by deputing him, at the age of seventeen, governor of the Prince of Calabria, his only son.

There exists near Naples an ancient and noble poplar, which is called "*the tree of King Robert*," because that this prince, previous to the hour at which he commenced his royal functions, frequently went there to think and to contemplate. He sometimes carried there a friend or a favourite disciple, and as this last title admitted the individual to his intimacy, the king granted to me that favour when we were under the wide spreading shade of that venerable tree to which his surname insured immortality. Robert commanded me to sit down at his side upon a green bank placed around the trunk of the tree, and addressing me, "young man," said he, "we are no longer under the gilded dome of a palace; I enter but into this solitary place, un-

disregarded, had not yet acquired renown. A certain means of pleasing this prince, was to introduce to him an artist, a philosopher, or an obscure poet of distinguished merit. This was the only kind of *impeachment* that was received with marks of favour at his court; he found his greatest pleasure in being the author and patron of a brilliant reputation, noble creation which requires so much instruction, discernment, and taste, that it associates with the laurels of the man of genius he who first revealed and presented it to Europe. Thus the court of this prince was composed of all the most remarkable personages in Italy, both as to character and merit; amongst others was the virtuous Count Elyear of Sabian, whose life was so pure and whose mind so cultivated, that notwithstanding his youth, the king did not fear to give him the highest proof of confidence and es-

secret sanctuary never be profaned by dissimulation, constraint, or flattery. The conversation of this prince perfectly accorded with this preliminary discourse. I never for a moment forgot his rank, yet there was nothing in the style of his behaviour towards me that led me to recall it, except that touching benevolence and that true philosophy by which he was characterized, and which excited in my mind a more lively admiration of it. I read to him my works, on which he made his observations, and gave me his advice, by which I profited. He was himself a poet, and composed good verses. Sometimes I combated his criticisms, and delivered my own with freedom, on the poetry which he recited to me. These discussions were very gratifying to him; they proved to him that liberty reigned under his tree, and that under his noble empire the mind might be happy and sincere.

In these interviews, always tête-à-tête, the king often spoke to me of you; I shewed him your letters, which inspired him with as much esteem for your character as enthusiasm for your talents. For a long period he had cherished the wish of calling you to his court, but had repressed it under the idea that you could not tear yourself from Vaucluse without extreme pain; but on learning that you have made a tour through Germany and France, he has ventured to propose to you to join to those that of Naples. I had been nine or ten months at the court of this prince. I had published my *Griselda*, which, thanks to the solicitude and patronage of the king, had great success; the most flattering to me was your approbation, expressed in a letter which I shewed as my true title of glory.

This triumph, the favour and benefits of the king, made me not forget

Fiammetta, and having acquired some reputation and fortune, I thought but of returning to Florence. As I was attached to the person of the king, I could not quit Naples without his permission. To Fiammetta I had promised inviolable secrecy respecting our mutual love, so that I could not admit him into my confidence; I confined myself to entreating leave of absence, only saying that a circumstance of importance to my family recalled me to my country; he assured me that he would grant it when he should have terminated an affair in which he had need of my assistance. I remained stationary, and one month after the king informed me that he should, on that evening, give a mysterious fête, and begged of me to repair to him at the decline of day. He ordered me to bring my lyre, and commanded me to sing the stanzas of my composition upon love and mys-

tery, and to join to the last these two verses:

The love in silence long conceal'd,  
Unveils itself and stands reveal'd.

I discovered an extraordinary similarity in the stanzas of these two verses which I was about to sing, to my own peculiar situation, and I vainly sought to divine what mystery the king might unveil in this approaching festival; I repaired to the appointed castle at eight o'clock in the evening; the king had not yet arrived there; I found several courtiers who were waiting his arrival, and who were, like myself, ignorant of the cause and the object of the fête, the preparations of which they witnessed. In the gardens was constructed a superb edifice, forming a long gallery, ornamented throughout by orange and citron trees, in large golden baskets. The hall was illuminated by lustres of crystal, suspended by

garlands of roses ; in the recesses of the walls, upon a base of gold, were branches of artificial flowers, of which I could not guess the names ; at the extremity of the hall was a brilliant screen of golden gauze, fastened by festoons of flowering myrtles, and closed by a large clasp of jewels, which Robert alone could open ; all these preparations redoubled by curiosity. I waited for the king with the most lively impatience ; at the hour of nine he arrived : he gave his arm to the young Prince of Arragon, his relation, who had resided for two months at his court, and for whom he entertained a particular affection : the suite of the king was very numerous. As soon as he entered concealed musicians performed a grand symphony ; the king commanded us to place ourselves upon the verdant bank planted by orange-trees ; he seated himself with the young prince upon a throne prepared for him. In a short time

the music ceased ; the king called me and commanded me to repeat my stanzas. When I had finished the last, the concealed musicians repeated in a chorus these words :—

The love in silence long conceal'd,  
Unveils itself and stands reveal'd.

The king then arose, and after a moment's silence he opened the diamond clasp and drew aside the curtain ; but guess what was my inexpressible emotion, on seeing in an arbour of myrtles artificially illuminated, Fiammetta, in dazzling attire, seated on a throne of flowers : her eyes were fixed on me, and the lively tint that was diffused over her complexion, gave to her resplendent beauty a celestial and supernatural charm ; a rapid thought persuaded me that the prince, having discovered our mutual love, was about to unite us for ever ; bewildered with gratitude and joy, I only waited one word from his lips to pros-



trate myself at his feet : when the prince, raising his voice and presenting Fiammetta, " behold," said he, " my beloved daughter ; I acknowledge her solemnly in the presence of the chosen men of my court and of my dearest friends ; and behold the husband whom I have destined for her." — Saying these words, he took the Prince of Arragon by the hand and presented him to Fiammetta. The young princess turned pale and threw herself weeping into the arms of her father : and I, fallen from heaven into a gulph of misery, consumed by agonizing jealousy and heart-rending regret, I collected the little strength that still remained to me, I darted impetuously out of the hall, and I found myself in the gardens. I perceived a dark walk : I ran precipitately towards it ; my lyre I still mechanically held, dashed it with fury against a tree, then exhausted and irritated, I fell senseless

upon the ground ; two hours after, the domestics passing by this place, came to my assistance ; by them I was conveyed to the house, where during many days a burning fever confined me to my bed. Since then I have learned the history of the mother of Fiammetta, which is briefly as follows : Robert, before his marriage, had entertained a criminal attachment for a young woman : Fiammetta was the unfortunate offspring of this intrigue ; her father promised to acknowledge her when she should have attained her seventeenth year. Five or six years after this period he married, and ceased to see his mistress. She, thus deserted, repaired to Naples with her daughter, and concealed her shame, her grief, and her repentance, in that retreat where I saw Fiammetta for the first time. Some months after my arrival at Naples, the King became a widower. Fiammetta's mother, who

had preserved a correspondence at Naples, quickly learnt this event. As her daughter was now seventeen years of age, she no longer hesitated to convey her thither, where she secretly established herself. She wrote to the King, to claim the promise which he had made of acknowledging his daughter, who was still in absolute ignorance of her birth. Robert expressly forbid her revealing the secret, and engaged to declare it himself in a very few days. He saw her frequently under a supposed name, and charmed by her beauty, her innocence, and her grace, he determined on ensuring her future aggrandizement. He found the means of suffering her to be seen (but unconsciously) by the Prince of Arragon, who became so deeply interested in her, that he consented, with transport, to espouse her. Fiammetta, since her residence at Naples, not having the slightest suspicion of these events, was

only occupied by an unceasing anxiety to discover my dwelling, in order to convey to me a letter ; for she hesitated to declare her sentiments to her mother until she should discover that mine were still unchanged. She had no longer her young confidante Sylvia, and Ambrosia considered it necessary, in a great city, to watch over her with a vigilance which never for a moment relaxed. Thus Fiammetta sought in vain a means of renewing our correspondence, when the King gave the fête which I have just described. I have said that Fiammetta, distracted and in tears, fell on the bosom of her father. The wretched state of her mind was mistaken for the natural effect of surprise and newly-awakened tenderness, and my disappearance from the hall was scarcely noticed, in the tumult caused by that surprising scene. But the following day, Fiammetta, with all the artlessness of her character, in-

formed the King of our late passion and mutual engagement ; she added, that no change of fortune could change her heart. The King replied, with severity, that he had given his word to the Prince of Arragon, and that she must now assume sentiments conformable to the rank to which he had elevated her. Fiammetta wept, and the King quitted her, repeating that he must be obeyed: As soon as my health was sufficiently restored to permit me to leave my apartment, the King commanded my attendance ; he informed me with kindness of all the circumstances which I have related, pitied my destiny, but he added, that I could not reasonably pretend to the hand of his daughter, and that I must renounce a passion from which no hope could ever more result. "I demand of you," continued he, "a sacrifice, the bitterness of which I shall too deeply share ; that you shall quit Naples, for six months, and depart

without delay. You will find in Tuscany new proofs of my friendship ; I have given my orders, that an estate shall be purchased for you there. Being unable to contribute to your happiness, I shall at least have the consolation of adding to your fortune."

"Would," exclaimed I, "that it were permitted to me to speak to you, as you once commanded me to do in times that are passed, under the shade of your poplar"....."Speak freely," replied Robert, it is a right which you may always claim when alone with me."

"Well then, my Lord," replied I, "is it worthy of your great soul, to propose a compromise when you may obtain a noble sacrifice? The benefits which I have received from you, more than suffice for all the attainable objects of my ambition. I have regarded them as proofs of your esteem, and those which you now offer me would not be honourable either for your

or for me. I shall depart this evening : I will accept nothing more ; I can sacrifice my sentiments to your peace, but I barter not my principles for gold." I ceased to speak, on perceiving in the countenance of the King an altered expression mingled with surprise. " Remember my Lord," replied I, " that it is not to the King that I address these reproaches, since he has commanded me to explain myself to a friend." At these words the King extended to me his hand. " Your friend admires you," said he to me, " and the King thanks you for having given him a lesson of delicacy and generosity. Go, my dear Boccacio, let my friendship and gratitude be your consolation, and promise me to return in six months." I pressed his beneficent hand upon my heart ; some tears escaped my eyes, we were both deeply penetrated. He embraced me ; I hastily tore myself from him, and an hour after this interview de-

parted for Florence.—Fiammetta, now called the Princess Maria, espoused the Prince of Arragon. The King who has a general passion for fêtes, gave on the occasion of this marriage a very splendid one, the detailed relation of which, published throughout Italy, was not the least of my pains. The circumstance which most contributed to ease me of my miserable passion, was the idea that in the midst of so much splendour and magnificence, a husband, young, handsome, and of a rank so elevated, our early and unfortunate loves would soon be forgotten.

She quitted Naples at the period when I was to return thither, after which I made it my residence; for some months I have travelled through the different parts of Italy, with which I was unacquainted, and in passing through Florence to return to Naples, my usual residence, I was deputed by my countrymen to wait upon you, and



this mission was too agreeable to me, not to induce me to sacrifice all my other affairs to the honour which I felt in executing it.—Boccacio having terminated his recital, questioned Petrarch in his turn upon all that he had experienced since the marriage of Laura, and upon the state of his heart. Petrarch related to him all his history; he felt much satisfaction in confiding the detail of all his sorrows to a friend, who could so well conceive their bitterness and extent. The night almost passed away in this reciprocal confidence, and the following day the two friends departed together. They performed a part of the journey by sea; in landing on the coast of Tuscany, Petrarch perceived a laurel immediately; he quitted Boccacio, and ran with impetuosity to gather a branch of the cherished tree; it was necessary, in order to reach it, to cross a wide stream but he fell into the water, much deeper

in this place than had been supposed. He wounded himself in the leg; and finding himself entangled by the plants on the borders of the stream, he required the aid of Boccacio who ran to his assistance. He wrote on this adventure the journal which begins thus :

Drawn from the stream, &c.

Petrarch was received with enthusiasm at Florence; the Florentines rendered him all the honours which men of rank and birth receive, without pleasure and without pride, and the Florentines distinguished themselves by appreciating the value of genius; they restored to him all his property, and conducted him in pomp to the little city of Arezzo, where they insisted on his taking possession of the house in which he was born. He found it such as he had left it in his infancy. The magistrates of the city, from respect for the renown of Petrarch, would not suffer the different

proprietors that had inhabited his castle to make the smallest change there. Petrarch had the inexpressible gratification of being encouraged every where ; of finding there the same amusement, the same pictures, and of recalling there the days of his infancy. The genius of the arts had watched over this habitation, and so much did its present appearance resemble that of thirty years before, that it seemed as if time even had respected it. During his residence at Arezzo, a great lord in the environs of that city presented him with a delightful country house, and this present was accompanied with all that grace which might render it as honourable as it was magnificent. Petrarch passed some days at Arezzo ; he wished to go from thence to Naples, but at this period the civil war rendered the journey absolutely impracticable. He separated himself from Boccaccio, whom business of importance recalled

to Florence, and he departed for Milan; he dwelt there near the church of Saint Ambrose, founded by that celebrated father; his house was in the neighbourhood of the little chapel, where St. Ambrose gave the blessing to St. Augustine when he separated them from the sect of the Manicheans; it was in this place that these two great personages sung together that sacred hymn, formed to display the joy with which they were penetrated. The residence of Petrarch was situated near the garden whither St. Augustine went to meditate on his conversion, and where he heard that celebrated voice which said to him, "*tolle, lege*," (take, read). Petrarch wandered in these gardens continually, and there abandoned himself to a religious and poetic enthusiasm, and there composed an infinite number of fine poems. Just at this period war broke out through the state of Milan, as in the rest of Italy.

The Milanese sent all their troops to Mantua, with an order to besiege that city. The Pavians, their neighbours, whose vines had been ravaged, determined to recompense themselves by taking possession of those of the Milanese, who were deprived of all defence since they had sent their army to Mantua. The Pavians sent their vine gatherers, escorted by soldiers, who threw themselves upon the vines by which Milan was surrounded. As all resistance was impossible, these armed vine gatherers proceeded in their work of destruction without the smallest obstacle, and, loaded with grapes, gaily returned to Pavia.

Petrarch was still at Milan. The road to Naples being still impracticable, he took refuge in the castle of Capronica, belonging to the Count Orso d'Aguillase, whom he had known at Avignon, and who had married Agnes Collonne, the niece of his friend.

He was received in this castle with great delight, worthy of being inhabited by a poet. The Count d'Aguilase called his attention to all the different points of view that recalled the fictions of mythology, or the interesting association connected with history. The Count took him to the height of a tower, from which Petrarch discovered with delight the Mount Soraste, celebrated in the verses of Horace; a lake spoken of by Virgil; the city of Sutri; the field where Saturn threw a few scattered seeds and grains, which in a moment became fruitful. This residence was delightful from its woods, its waters, its deep wilds spread over with moss, flowers, and hung with ivy; the stag, the deer, and the wild boar, ranged in flocks through both forest and plain. In these sad times, rendered mournful by discord and civil war, Petrarch found in this place the Muses and the inspirations; the dangers by which he

He still more exalted his  
 position, offering to him conti-  
 nued rest and picturesque;  
 the wood was armed  
 the curiessed la-  
 in the place of a  
 covered his  
 the fisher-  
 as a rod from  
 the nets; the im-  
 drew water in  
 and say the cry  
 announced  
 all reached  
 While they  
 with the  
 associated;  
 experienced  
 a peace  
 basis  
 all  
 in excite  
 new  
 approach,

and only to attain a temporary suspension, till the combatants, worn out and wanting money, should themselves wish to repose. The horrors of civil war had somewhat subsided, and it was thought that a general peace would succeed. It was at this moment that the Duke of Clarence, the second son of Edward, King of England, came to Milan to espouse the Princess Violante, the daughter of Galeas. At these splendid nuptials he gave a repast, to which Petrarch was invited. As a particular mark of distinction, he was admitted to the first table, where there were none but princes and nobles of the highest rank. After having assisted at all the fêtes given on the occasion of this marriage, Petrarch no longer thought of the journey to Naples; he had not forgotten that his brother Gerard was a Chartreux in a monastery of Italy: he ardently desired once more to behold this brother, whom he



had always so tenderly loved ; but being no longer able to defer his journey to Naples, he delayed to a future period this interesting visit. He took leave of the Duke of Milan, and departed. The King received him with open arms, presented to him the richest gifts, and immediately announced to him, that if he desired it he should be crowned at Naples. Petrarch, with all the gratitude which was due to him, frankly replied, that he wished to receive that honour at Rome. Enamoured with that famous city, which he had never seen, he felt that in the ode which he had to compose for his coronation, he could be no where so truly inspired as at that capital, where he might invoke the shades of Virgil and of Horace.— The King, far from being irritated by his refusal, approved his reasons, applauded his poetic enthusiasm, and presented to him, for his coronation,

superb vestments and magnificent jewels. Petrarch passed at Naples a winter the most agreeable ; he there found Boccacio, who, with himself, was invited by the King to enjoy the shade of the *Poplar*. The beauty of the climate permitted the friends to pass whole hours there ; it was there the King conversed with these two poets, who never found themselves constrained by his presence, who knew so well how to establish a perfect equality under that tree, consecrated to liberty and to the purest pleasures of intellect. Beneath the fine azure of an Italian sky, the poplar resumed its beautiful foliage as early as the month of February. Petrarch saw it with delight unfold its leaves, as if it had been reanimated by the enchantment of his lute, his verses, and those of Boccacio ; but an event unlooked for darkened at once the fairest visions of his muse. A communication from Avignon, by reviving all his

hopes of highest happiness, left nothing for his imagination, no image in his soul but the remembrance of Laura, and his passion for her. He received a letter in an unknown hand ; he hastily glanced his eye over the signature : he found, with extreme astonishment, that it was that of Orphania, the young creature whom he had never seen but under the name of Roger, and in whom his muse had inspired a passion so tender and so profound. The letter contained the following lines :—

“ I have discovered by the true Roger de Machault that which my heart had anticipated ; and what other lute than that of Petrarch, what other voice than his could have caused me such emotion. Brought up in the deepest solitude, the world and its pleasures are to me alike unknown ; but you I have seen, you I have understood ; what interest, and what curiosity could then remain for me, since

I have lost those to whom my cares were necessary? Since then there exists no more for me one hope of happiness, I go to hide myself for ever in the calm retreats of a monastic life ; but at least before I quit this world, from which I bear with me but one single image, one solitary remembrance, I shall enjoy the consolation of having first imparted to you that event which must render you so happy. She whom you so tenderly love has resumed her liberty ; the chains that separated you are broken : Laura is a widow !— May you find in her all the value of that love with which she has inspired you, and of that glory which she owes to you. May she possess all the sentiments of the sorrowful

“ ORPHANIA.”

In the first perusal of this letter, Petrarch only experienced sensations of joy in learning that Laura had once more become the arbitress of her own

destiny. It was not till he had exhausted all the delightful ideas that a hope the dearest and best founded could inspire, that he thought of the miserable Orphania; he admired the enthusiasm of that passion, at once so tender and so generous, and he mourned over her destiny. His compassion, however, was but a slight and transient impression; he was absorbed in the image of Laura, and that of his own happiness; he imparted his feelings to Boccaccio, and the pleasure of speaking of them every moment increased.— With what delight he glanced into the future, to enjoy then the happy lot which his love was preparing for him! What transports he experienced in representing to himself all the particulars of his interview with Laura, when the season of her mourning should have passed away! What a triumph! a thousand times beyond that which he was to attain at the capitol, of re-

appearing in her eyes, loaded with honours, covered with glory, and of deposing at her feet his crowns. What lustre would diffuse itself over Vaucluse ! With what new sounds would that fountain re-echo, which hitherto had only resounded the bitter notes of grief; and that lute, whose harmonious cords had only expressed the sounds of lamentation and regret, had exhausted all the touching tones of melancholy, could henceforth celebrate, in melodious strains, love triumphant over every obstacle, and crowned at length with happiness. After having received new marks of the kindness and friendship of the King, and penetrated with admiration and gratitude towards this prince, Petrarch quitted Naples and took the road to Rome; but the civil wars had broken out at the return of spring with more violence than ever, and to that was added one

calamity more, the horde of banditti which were ravaging every part of Italy. They burnt the villages and castles ; they profaned and pillaged the churches ; they were become extremely numerous in one part of the road that Petrarch had to cross. In order to avoid them, having an escort and some guides to chose a circuitous path, one evening, in one of these cross roads, on entering into a little wood, he heard the tones of a voice accompanied by an instrument ; he was much fatigued : he advanced on that side, and seating himself at some distance, on a little hillock beneath a tree, he wished for a few moments to repose in this place ; he then discovered that the voice which he heard at a distance was not, as he had at first imagined, that of a shepherd ; he listened with attention to the following lament :

Sweet emanation of the power  
That made all good, delightful flower !  
Thy blushing bud was meant to be  
The pledge of peace, and love, and glee :  
And how can thy meek graces blow,  
Amidst a gloomy world of woe ?  
Then wherefore yet thy charms disclose ?  
Stay yet awhile, thou lovely Rose !

For war o'er all our fields hath past,  
And breath'd around his poisoning blast ;  
And from the desolated waste  
Away the timid Graces haste ;  
And far and wide, with tears and gore  
Palace and cot are sprinkled o'er :  
Then wherefore yet thy charms disclose ?  
Stay yet awhile, thou lovely Rose !

Sweet stranger ! in this joyless land,  
Where shall thy gentle charms expand ?  
Where wilt thou find a guiltless breast,  
On which thy cherished form to rest ?  
Or where a yet unplunder'd shrine,  
Round which thy hallow'd leaves to twine ?—  
Then wherefore yet thy charms disclose ?  
Stay yet awhile, thou lovely Rose !

This world is all by war defaced ;  
Go, flourish in the desert waste !



There, if beside some fountain lone  
Thy sweets are shed unseen, unknown,  
Yet there the bloody hand of war  
Shall ne'er approach, thy form to mar :  
Then wherefore here thy charms disclose ?  
Go, bloom elsewhere, thou lovely Rose !

But when on our long-wasted shore  
The guardian olive blooms once more,  
When war's destroying tempests cease,  
Then may'st thou join the wreath of peace,  
And mingle with the laurel bough,  
Around the patriot victor's brow :  
Then, child of morning ! *then* arise,  
Then shew thee to thy parent skies !

Petrarch dwelt on these sounds with deep emotion, for it seemed that the voice was not unknown to him ; he arose precipitately, and, after having advanced a few paces, he perceived at the foot of a lofty tree a young man, whom he instantly recognized. This was Roger de Machault, who raised a piercing cry on perceiving him, and instantly threw himself round his neck.

Roger, on being questioned, told him that after a journey of some months, he was preparing to quit Italy. Petrarch proposed to him to accompany him to Rome, to which Roger joyfully consented. The roads which they were obliged to take, to avoid the different hordes of banditti, brought them the same evening near the castle of the Comte d'Aguillas, where Petrarch had already resided. The owners of the castle were not there, but the name of Petrarch was every where sufficient to ensure a generous and hospitable reception, and particularly in that place, where he was personally known and valued. The two travellers slept at the castle, and before they retired for the night, they mutually related their adventures. Roger recounted his as follows:—"I still inhabited my hermitage, when I received the letter in which you spoke to me with an expression so touching

of the beautiful Hermione Vicomtesse de Sault ; but, my exile once terminated, the idea of once more beholding Agnes of Navarre, Comtesse de Foix, occupied so touchingly my imagination and my heart, that nothing could divert me from it. I calculated my departure and journey in such a manner, as to enable me to arrive at her court on the same day on which my exile terminated. The Comte was absent, but the princess received me with grace mingled with joy. I sung to her the verses which I had made during our separation ; they were entirely on that subject. She remarked this : adding, in the presence of witnesses, that her minstrel had not been able to compose those of any other nature during his absence. I had lost the habit of regarding this language as unimportant ; and if I believed that no person at the court could doubt of the true motive of my long absence,

and of the culpable temerity which had led me to become an exile, I persuaded myself that one of the reasons which had induced the Comtesse to guard so scrupulously this secret was the fear that it might only excite the jealousy of the Comte. This idea flattered me. If the jealousy of the Comte was to be dreaded, who could suppose that he could entertain such a sentiment without its becoming violent? These reflections, and many others of a similar nature, completely intoxicated my reason, by exalting equally my passion and my vanity. Frequently, when tête-à-tête with the Princess, I affected the greatest reserve; and, notwithstanding, I remarked that she had an air of seriousness and severity that I had not noticed in former times, and which she now assumed towards me in general society. This circumstance did not wound me; on the contrary, I saw in her conduct a certain

want of confidence in herself, that appeared to me more calculated to flatter than to offend. My sister was at this time absent from the court ; she returned before the Prince, and I learned from her with infinite vexation that the Comtesse had confided to many persons the cause of my departure and disgrace ; that, in fact, she had not even made a mystery of it to the Comte de Foix, who had found in this adventure nothing but a subject of pleasantry. My self-love might have enabled me to place an agreeable interpretation : the coldness and severity of the Comtesse my feelings were proof against ; the rigour of her anger, her injustice even, could not have awakened them : but it was impossible for me to support her cruel mockery. Love may resist severity the most stern, but contempt has a certain tendency to extinguish the flame. I became gloomy, silent, distracted. I then re-perused

your letter, which made an astonishing impression on my mind.

The Comte returned : he received me in a tone of good humour, of irony, and pleasantry, which penetrated to the very recesses of my soul. I had the courage to dissimulate perfectly, and this was one step towards loving no more. I was not alienated from Agnes when she received with indignation the avowal of my passion, and banished me her presence ; she had then done what it was her duty to do, but my repentance and submission had certainly merited her esteem. She ought to have concealed a fault which I had expiated. Besides, it is by no means sufficient that a woman of virtue should repulse a criminal passion, she ought earnestly to desire its cure ; this is the only species of compassion which she is authorized to feel, and which even her sense of virtue de-

mands. I knew that, instead of feeling this justifiable compassion, the Countess triumphed in my sufferings, and that my misery was to her only a light source of amusement, since it was an homage paid to her charms. I compared this character, so vain and frivolous, with that of Hermione, whose wounds self-love had not been able to cure, and who, like me, was capable of loving without hope ! At length I saw that our hearts were formed for each other. The Comte gave several fêtes, which lasted more than a fortnight, designed for the amusement of some foreign princes, who were his guests. During the period of these festivals, I exhibited a sort of gaiety, which appeared to surprise the Princess. I sung once more the verses composed for her, but no longer in the tone of gallantry ; she bestowed on them no praises. One evening, she

asked me to sing the verses upon absence, which I had composed during my late journey ; I replied, smiling at the same moment, that I had forgotten them ; she blushed, and all her pride could not conceal from me her secret chagrin. At the last fête, I had announced that it was my design to sing the new stanzas which I had composed the night preceding ; a beam of pleasure lighted up the fine countenance of Agnes, and convinced me that she anticipated that in these verses she should find an expiation of my fault, in the reply which I had made to her demand some days before. I felt myself touched, and, for a moment embarrassed, I had need of repeating internally, “ I have only been the poor and idle sport of woman’s vanity.” At length, collecting all my courage, I ceased to regard her, and I sung, not without some remorse, in a



tone of firmness the following stanzas :—\*

Alas, my heart ! I knew not thee,  
When I mistook for passion's blaze,  
The casual gloss which poetry  
Throws on each object she surveys !  
Alas, my heart ! I knew not thee,  
When at the shrine of vanity,  
I gave my hours a sacrifice :  
How deep the crime—how dear the price !

What comfort can they now impart,  
The pomp of song, the specious lie ?  
The play of mind, and not of heart,  
Laborious Fancy's ecstasy.  
The meteor fires of mimic love,  
Unwarming o'er the bosom move ;  
There is no flame beside the true,  
That lights the breast and cheers it too !

\* For these and the preceding stanzas, beginning " Sweet emanation," the translator acknowledges herself indebted to the ingenious and elegant versification of Sidney Walker, Esq. of Trinity College, Cambridge, the author of " Gustavus," and other admired poems.

My heartless folly has profan'd  
The noble name of genuine love :  
His soul-felt griefs, his sighs unfeign'd,  
Whate'er can touch, whate'er can move :  
I've sung to measures of desire,  
A false, fantastic, worthless fire ;  
And cloth'd in language, proud and high,  
A base and vulgar phantasy.

Not thus the faithful bard, who gave  
To love his talents and his fame ;  
And wide o'er earth and ocean-wave,  
Diffused in song his Laura's name.  
It was his boast, wherever known,  
To blend her glory with his own ;  
And, mingled with his verse sublime,  
To send her praise thro' every clime.

And, oh ! if uninspired, in vain  
We toil for pleasure or renown ;  
If faith and feeling only gain  
The poet's, as the lover's crown.  
Then is the meed of glory mine.  
Come from your shades, ye sacred nine,  
And twine in blooming wreaths for me,  
The leaves of immortality !

Dear absent girl ! whose artless worth,  
With every charm of form combined,

And generous love, and simple mirth,  
And soft humanity of mind,  
Might well have merited to prove  
A firmer faith, a worthier love :  
How little could *he* know his heart,  
Whoe'er resolv'd from thee to part !

'Tis o'er ! the fleeting dream's forgot,  
Remorse and love remain alone ;  
I see my whole disastrous lot,  
And sigh to think how much is gone !  
Yet hear mine oft-repeated lay—  
“ Not sin—but folly bade me stray ;  
I knew not mine own heart ;—forgive  
The thoughtless crime, and bid me live !”

These stanzas were extremely applauded. Almost all who heard them perceived in the lines only poetic fiction ; but the Princess, and those whom she had admitted to her confidence on the subject of my disgrace, were not deceived respecting my intentions, and the project which I had announced in a manner so mortifying to the Com-  
a. Encouraged by general ap-

plause, and by that decisive action, I dared at length to raise my eyes: and fix them once more upon the Princess, the expression of whose countenance indicated surprise and mortification. I feigned not to perceive it. Had I observed in that countenance, during the remainder of the evening, the slightest tinge of melancholy, I should have considered myself culpable, and I should once more have resumed my fetters; but she affected towards me so much hauteur, she spoke to me in a tone so dry and so contemptuous, that I felt nothing but my triumph, and the malignant joy of having humbled her self-love, of which I had so long and cruelly been the victim. At the close of the evening, I demanded of her a private audience on the following day, a request which she granted with an air light and unfeeling, but through which I could discover a little astonishment and much anger. You may well

imagine that the night to me was sleepless : I had to act a great part to support it to the end, and to enable me to do this, I had need to collect my scattered powers. I had still before my eyes the image of the Comtesse de Foix, that charming figure which had once captivated all my senses, and which still pursued and tormented me as an apparition. With such a vision before my eyes I could scarcely believe myself cured, and the day surprised me in a state of suffering which I vainly endeavoured to surmount. At the hour prescribed by the Princess, I repaired to her house. I resembled far less a lover about to break his chains for ever, than a criminal seeking to obtain his pardon. My deportment gave courage to the resentment of the Princess ; at first I had beheld her with much emotion, but I was now so struck by the change which I remarked in her air and manner towards me, that

by degrees I conquered my timidity and embarrassment. Anger and chagrin had altered all her features, her countenance expressed nothing but disdain, irony, and resentment the most bitter. There was in her looks something so insulting, the sound of her voice was so harsh and discordant, that recognizing no more in the figure before me the object of my former devotion, it required no effort to resume all my projects of vengeance. She told me that she anticipated that I was about to demand leave of absence. I calmly replied, that I was come with the intention of announcing, that I was compelled to quit her court without delay, and for ever. "And whither do you design to go?" she asked, forcing a smile. "Whither my heart shall lead me," I replied. "I advise you not," she added, "to continue the profession of. . . . . To aggrandize yourself in this situation, you must have

a soul, prudence, principles which you have not, a superiority of talent which you want."

"I grant it, Madam: yesterday evening my verses proved it; but a true passion for an object worthy of inspiring it, will develop my genius, and fix my fate." At these words the Comtesse became so irritated, that she lost sight of the dissimulation which pride had taught her to assume. "Go," said she, "and appear at my court no more." I made her a profound bow, and deposited at her feet the chain of pearls and diamonds with which she had once ornamented my viol. "This magnificent present," I observed, "was once the precious gift of your benevolence, but it is now my duty to restore it."

The Comtesse for a moment remained silent, then resuming the conversation in a somewhat milder tone, "have you considered," she conti-

nued, "that this action is an insult?" This reproach a little touched me. "Deign, Madam," I replied, "to permit me to tell you that an imperious order would never induce me to resume it." "An entreaty then would but prove an useless condescension?"— "Never!" "Ah, well then dispose at your own pleasure of your future lot; I desire that it may be happy, but empoison not at least with the venom of hatred all the past—preserve this chain." At these words my eyes filled with tears; I threw myself on my knees, and pressing to my lips the foldings of her robe, I resumed the chain, arose, and precipitately quitted her apartment. With the Prince I held a conversation of another kind; he shewed not the least bitterness towards me, his remarks were seasoned with a degree of pleasantry which I vainly endeavoured to receive with a good grace, and we separated friends. I quitted the



court, however, with painful regrets and bitter remembrances ; I took the road to Avignon, in the intention of visiting you at Vacluse, and then of seeking the Countess de Bauffremont, whom I wished to employ as a mediatrix between Hermione and myself. At the distance of some leagues from Avignon, I lost myself ; it was night, and by the light of the moon I perceived a castle, whither I went to entreat for a reception. My name was demanded, and I had no sooner pronounced it than I was requested to enter. A servant preceded me to announce me to the mistress of the house ; in the mean time I crossed a court, I entered a large and gloomy vestibule, and ascended a staircase which was not better lighted ; at length the door of the saloon was thrown open, where, seated by a table, upon which were placed two lights, were an elderly lady and a most inte-

resting girl. "Welcome, welcome, my dear Roger," said the old lady, before she could have had time to regard me more nearly. Astonished by this familiar and friendly reception, I took off my hat and advanced more nearly, when both the ladies exclaimed "it is not he!" I then recollected that formerly you had done me the honour, in travelling, of assuming my name, and I guessed the cause of that surprise which I witnessed. I assured them that I was very truly the minstrel Roger de Machault, but that I was not ignorant that a friend, very dear to me, had for ever immortalized that name, by condescending to bear it for a few days. At this explanation the young lady was melted into tears, and murmured in a gentle and agitated tone of voice, "it was, then, Petrarch?" I was obliged to confess the truth; her tears now followed more rapidly; you anticipate that this

beautiful and unfortunate girl was Orphania. Her sorrows and her romantic passion interested me so deeply, that I remained more than a week in her society ; she gladly retained me at the castle to talk of you, to interrogate me as to the most minute particulars respecting you, to dwell on all that could touch, all that could interest you. I quitted her with mingled feelings of sympathy and admiration. On arriving at Avignon, I learnt that the Court of Love had assembled to try a celebrated cause, that of Arnold de Castelnaudery, who, after having obtained the glory of bearing away the first prize from the "Jeux Floraux," had tarnished his triumph by his malignity, and his satirical productions against women. Cited to appear before their tribunal, he came not ; the ladies assembled, and in this affair at once judge and party, they doomed not the guilty to a slight punishment.

They declared him unworthy of ever more exercising the profession of minstrel, and incapable of excelling in the art of poetry, since he was destitute of its finest laws, those of chivalry, gallantry, and honour, by insulting women in his discourses and his poems. I assisted at this session of the Court of Love, and I heard the judgment pronounced, which was universally applauded. After the court was ended, I approached Aloïse de Beaufremont, and I obtained of her the promise of an interview the same evening; she received me with that benevolence which springs from friendship and joy the most animated, when I confided to her my sentiments and resolutions; she related to me all the touching particulars of your interview with Hermione. I repeated to her my last stanzas, and informed her that I had sung them publicly to the Princess, surrounded by all her court. Aloïse praised the

courage which I had shewn on this occasion, and she added that Hermione must approve my having rendered such homage to the sentiments which she had shewn towards me. The amiable Aloïse became my protectress, she led me to the feet of the Countess de Sault. My repentance, my last stanzas, and my protestations of attachment and fidelity, obtained for me her pardon. Hermione promised me her hand, but to that promise she attached one condition: "In obedience to a woman who has cruelly sported with your love, you have consented," she continued, "to pass two years in the recesses of a hermitage; I require not from you such a sacrifice, but I ought to give some dignity and grace to the favour I accord. Go then into Italy, and there remain for the space of eight months. On your return you will find one who will count the days of your absence." I mur-

mured not at my sentence, for it had the perfect approbation of Aloïse. I found that in submitting to it, I should not purchase too dearly the happiness which was promised to me. I dared to request, and I obtained the permission of passing with Hermione the first week of that exile. The time passed rapidly and delightfully to me, during which I lost all painful remembrances associated with the Countess de Foix. I departed for Italy. I have been here six months, and after your coronation I shall go, without delay, where gratitude and love recall me. Petrarch, who was deeply interested in the Viscountess de Sault, was charmed with the denouement of his friend's history ; perhaps he took an interest still more lively in his happiness, because he hoped for himself a destiny equally fortunate, for he was certain of receiving the hand of Laura, as soon as the accustomed forms of mourning would

permit her to dispose of it. Petrarch, loaded with honours, glory, and the hope of successful love, departed for Rome in the society of his friend. Having quitted Italy in his infancy, he had never seen that famous city which, from the earliest dawnings of reason, he had ardently desired to behold; and he was now to enter it for the first time, to enjoy that homage, the most flattering and delightful that man could receive. His emotion increased as he approached it more nearly, but how was it increased when he perceived its walls, and the numerous deputations advancing to welcome him! All the consecrated remembrances, the past splendour of this city, once queen and mistress of the world, presented themselves in a crowd to his sublime imagination. And was he about to be associated with the glory of these ancient wonders? "What!" he exclaimed, "and am I

indeed upon the sacred ground which Cincinnatus, Paul Emilius, and Scipio have trodden on their way to Rome ; and like them have proved victorious alike over the blows of fortune and the attacks of envy ? But what do I say ? There they passed loaded with the spoils of conquered and desolated countries, and I come to gather laurels more peaceful ; immortal also, which are neither stained with blood nor watered by tears. Invincible warriors, inflexible conquerors ! I envy not your fatal triumphs ; you cannot subjugate without destroying. Murder and death are your most powerful means of success. For you the voice of fame, menacing and terrible, is always heard with astonishment and dismay ; it announces but dreadful prodigies, whilst the genius of science conquers, not to destroy, but to enlighten and console the universe ; reigns only to benefit, and receives no tribute but that of



gratitude and admiration, the best merited, the most pure, the most noble!"

Petrarch was still speaking, when seeing the deputation approach, he descended from his horse to meet them. One of the friends of Petrarch, who had just quitted the castle, the senator Count Orso d'Aguillac, was at the head of the deputation, composed of his relations and the most illustrious citizens of Rome. On his reaching the shore, he embraced Petrarch, then presenting him to the deputation: the procession set out. In a few minutes they were informed by the senator that they must enter by the *Door of the People*. At that expression Petrarch started; for that name, often so vilely degraded, recalled in this place all the ideas of greatness, strength, and majesty. Petrarch at length entered the city, where his first triumph awaited him, preceded by his own dazzling renown. He was re-

ceived with all the transports of enthusiasm. He was conducted to a palace, where a magnificent residence was prepared for him, and where it was announced to him, that on the following day he would be crowned.

As soon as the first rays of the morning appeared his memorable day commenced. Petrarch was awakened by the sound of trumpets; the palace which he inhabited was almost immediately surrounded by an immense crowd of persons who wished to behold the hero of the day. The senators waited upon him to escort him to the capitol. Petrarch proceeded from the palace, his head uncovered, bearing his lyre, and dressed in the sumptuous robe which had been given him by King Robert. He ascended a car, where were seated with him the Count d'Aguillac and the principal personages of the council of the city. Able musicians, surrounded by all the

emblems of love, encircled the car their costume was in perfect conformity with that profane feast by recalling the Pagan ceremonies. The car was drawn by a number of young persons chosen from the highest families in Rome, whose parents had ardently desired that their children should be witnesses of honours rendered to talents, to virtue, and to genius. They wore superb habits of purple, embroidered with gold, and recited with a loud voice the verses of Petrarch, applauded to rapture. How were the figure of Petrarch, his fine expression, and his noble form, his deportment at the same time dignified and modest, admired and gazed at by the people ; he sought not to conceal the excess of his joy and of his tenderness. He wished not to conceal his gratitude from those who had rendered him such honours. It is great to accept with unshaken calmness the gifts of fortune, but it would be in-

gratitude to receive without emotion the homage of the heart. The car crossed the principal streets of Rome, and stopped at the capitol. Petrarch descended, and followed by the whole procession he reached an immense hall, at the end of which was a long gallery, whose doors were left open, and which was immediately filled by an infinite number of spectators. When Petrarch had been conducted to the centre of the hall, he harangued the people in a few words, and thrice exclaimed, "Live the Roman people ! Live the Senators ! May God preserve to them their liberty !" The Senators then approached, addressed to him a short discourse, and presented to him three crowns ; the first of ivy as a poet, the second of laurel, as the reward of well merited honours, the third of myrtle as the most devoted of lovers. Petrarch received the crowns, arose, and recited with transport a fine

sonnet upon the heroes of Rome. When he had finished, an universal exclamation expressed the enthusiasm which he inspired, and "live the capitol and the poet" resounded through the air. The ceremony being concluded, Petrarch was entreated to remain some moments longer, that all the persons who were in the gallery, and who wished to see him more nearly, might present themselves before him, as they were to pass by a door at the other extremity of the hall. Men and women of all ranks and all ages passed before him. In this multitude of persons, the eyes of Petrarch were at once fixed upon a woman, whose costume, figure, and deportment, were equally striking. She was in mourning. A long black veil entirely concealed her countenance. One of her hands, of a perfect form and dazzling whiteness, folded her veil upon her bosom. The beauty of this hand, the dignity and elegance of this mysterious

figure, her deep mourning, all recalled at that instant to Petrarch the remembrance of Laura. The stranger paused before him. She remained a moment immoveable. He thought he heard her sigh—his emotion increased—he turned pale : but at that moment the figure glided away and was lost in the crowd. She had left in the imagination and on the heart of Petrarch an impression, which all the glory of this day could not entirely dissipate. Nothing was wanting to his triumph, but the presence of Laura : he supposed it possible, that its having been known throughout the whole of Europe for more than six months, that he was to be crowned at Rome, Laura might have performed this long journey secretly, to be a witness of the triumph of him whom she loved, and who, to his passion for her, owed one of the crowns with which he had been presented. Notwithstanding, however, the delight of

such an idea, the visage and the remembrance of the veiled woman oppressed his heart: nor could he account himself for the peculiar feeling of sorrow which he experienced, and that melancholy which that apparition had caused. When all were by degrees withdrawing themselves from the hall, Petrarch quitted the capitol, reascended his car, which he found surrounded by an immense crowd of people, and in the midst of the loudest of acclamations and redoubled plaudits, he was conducted to the church of St. Peter. There Petrarch prostrated himself upon his knees at the altar of that superb edifice, and acknowledged the nothingness of human glory; he consecrated his talents to the Supreme Being; he placed his crown of laurels among the other offerings suspended around the altar. His crowns of ivy and of myrtle he still retained, but the same evening

the senate sent him another crown of laurel, with a prayer that he would preserve it for ever. This memorable fête was terminated by a splendid festival, given by the senators, and by a masked ball, where there were present persons the most eminent in rank, youth the most admired, and many foreign princes. After the repast they entered the saloon, where the musicians and the invited guests were arrived, and placed in the gallery appropriated for dancing. In the saloon was seated a blind and venerable magistrate, who eagerly demanded, "where was Petrarch?" On being conducted to him, he clasped him in his arms, exclaiming, "happy is he who has beheld him!" This expression occasioned a burst of laughter. The old man heard it, and resuming the conversation, he said to Petrarch, "is it not true that I see you better than those who but behold you with their eyes; in fact, it is the



soul that sees, for it is that alone which by its applause can recompense the most touching productions of genius." At ten o'clock the ball commenced, and it was not yet midnight when Petrarch, after having danced, amused himself by contemplating the scene around him. He admired the variety of the disguises, which were all of the greatest magnificence, and stopped opposite a door which on opening suddenly discovered an object on which his attention was wholly fixed. This was a female who wore a long floating robe of blue satin, strewed with stars of silver, a white veil covered her face, a crown of sapphires and of diamonds ornamented her head ; she held a serpent of gold and jewels. The attribute and her costume revealed the allegorical figure of immortality. She approached Petrarch, and offered him in silence her magnificent serpent. Petrarch received it with an inexpressi-

ble emotion, seized the hand which he felt half recoiling and tremble in his own : but at the same moment the beautiful figure tore herself from him, leaving with him the brilliant symbol, through the medium of which she had paid her homage to him. She then vanished precipitately by the door which she had just opened, and closed it upon her. This action was much applauded by the spectators, who were not however astonished by it. Petrarch excited an enthusiasm so general, that they thought it not extraordinary that this female should entertain for him a passion so tender and so profound. But this second apparition caused such a sensation in the soul of Petrarch, that he felt himself for the moment almost overwhelmed. He had recognized in this captivating figure the mourning female in the capitol. It was the same form, the same step ; that trembling hand which he had pressed within his

own, was the same which he had admired in the morning, and all these charms are those of Laura. But how could it be conceived that a person so rigid in her principles, so prudent in her deportment, could have undertaken and accomplished such a journey in the first months of her widowhood and of her mourning, and notwithstanding the opposition of her mother, of her family, of her friends, who certainly would have made every effort to prevent the execution of a design so extravagant. He was bewildered in these conjectures, which absorbed him so much, that not being able to overcome his distraction, he returned before the hour of two, although the ball did not terminate before the commencement of day. His friends, Roger and Boccacio, who had repaired to Rome in order to be present at his coronation, followed him, and they conversed some hours together. Boc-

cacio congratulated him gaily upon the magnificent present which he had received from the unknown lady. Petrarch replied with an air of seriousness that astonished his two friends; they questioned him, and he opened to them his heart; they thought that his suspicions had not any probability. "Be assured," added Boccacia, "that this veiled woman, whom you pursued, is a young and beautiful Italian, captivated by your verses, and dazzled by the relation of your triumph. It does not require so much to touch the heart of a woman of sense and feeling. But, even supposing that this unknown lady should be Laura, why should this idea overwhelm you with sorrow?"—"Ah!" replied Petrarch, "who can explain the secret sorrows of the heart? Why should the resemblance of this veiled woman to Laura thus make me tremble; or this figure, in which I have perceived every charr

and every grace, appear to me so formidable and so solemn? And that emblematic sign, that symbol of eternity, which her trembling hand has left in mine? Eternity! idea wonderful and terrible! so consoling, so sublime, for every saint and every child of misfortune, and before which all human felicity vanishes. I confess to you, my friends, I am alarmed at the accumulated gifts which fortune has lavished upon me. I cannot believe in that delightful future, of which the prospect is already so overwhelming. Does not wisdom consist in fearing her favour and suspecting her promises? In fact, that heavenly figure which has appeared to me, has been to my eyes but a shade—a phantom, which has left me oppressed with insurmountable melancholy.”

On saying these words he placed his hands upon his eyes a deluge of tears forced th his pale cheek, and twice aura escaped

from his lips in mournful accents. His two friends remained petrified. They both made vain efforts to dissipate the gloomy thoughts which haunted his imagination. "No," said he, "this magnificent present and this allegory are only to remind me that no happiness remains for me on earth, that in heaven only can I enjoy that precious gift ! I am not superstitious ; but I believe that the Deity in his supreme goodness, in order to prepare the mind for the endurance of afflicting dispensations, sometimes condescends to impart to mortals these divine and sorrowful warnings."

This conversation lasted until the break of day. Petrarch, sighing bitterly, at length promised his friends to endeavour to divert his mind from these painful ideas. Roger, at length, bid him adieu. Petrarch was under the necessity of returning to Florence, on business relating to the restitution

of his fortune, and was still obliged to remain some months in Italy, though he had the most lively desire of returning to Avignon: he consoled himself, for this delay, by reflecting that the customary forms, then so exactly observed by women, would not permit of his seeing Laura before the expiration of her mourning, and he felt assured of arriving at Vaucuse at this period. He charged Roger with a letter for Isoarda, and to remit to Laura his crown of myrtles; an offering which was, indeed, her due! He then threw himself upon his bed, to repose for a few hours, after the glorious labours of that day. He slept, indeed! but his sorrowful presentiments pursued him, and appeared realized in a dream, the most extraordinary, and the most painful. He, shrouded in black crape, and trembling, observed that a crown of withered myrtles was placed upon her head: she

passed before him, and heaving a deep sigh, she stretched forth her arms, as if in the attitude of flight, and immediately vanished. He would have pursued her, but he felt, under his feet, some weight which impeded his steps ; he suddenly stopped, cast down his eyes, and saw a coffin ! He fell on his knees in all the bitterness of grief : at this moment, a concert of heavenly voices resounded through the air ; he once more raised his eyes, and found himself surrounded by clouds of purple and azure ; he invoked heaven immediately ; the clouds were dissipated, a supernatural light disclosed a brilliant prospect ; it was an immense grove of laurels, of prodigious height, united with each other by crowns of flowers, forming long garlands. The foliage of these fine trees was of a green tint, infinitely more lively than that of emerald ; their branches seemed to reach almost to the clouds. At the



termination of this majestic avenue, stood, upon a pedestal of diamonds, the immoveable and dazzling figure of Eternity ; she held in one hand an unfaded palm, and in the other a glittering cross. Petrarch bewildered, experienced an emotion so violent, that he awoke. His first movement was to spring from his bed, and to prostrate himself on the earth ! He remained in this attitude without having strength to raise himself, or even to move, until some person entered his chamber ; he was placed upon his bed. Boccacio, who came to see him, employed all his eloquence to persuade him, that this dream was the natural result of those thoughts, which, during the day, had taken such firm possession of his imagination. Petrarch listened to him in silence, but his deep sorrow shewed but too plainly how slight was the impression which this reasoning had produced upon his mind.

New honours, however, awaited him ; and these, for a short season, diverted him from the source of his grief, or at least precluded him from its pernicious indulgence. The senate sent him the act of his coronation, the preamble of which contained an eulogium, the most flattering to his talents as a poet and historian ; he received, at the same time, a diploma, which invested him with the title of Roman Citizen, with all its privileges. During several days, he was under the necessity of paying visits of acknowledgment, and, after those, of accepting a great number of entertainments. Boccacio, who accompanied him to all these assemblies, neglected no effort to discover the mysterious and veiled lady, the cause of so much trouble and disquietude ; but all his researches were, on this subject, fruitless. Petrarch had now been several months at Rome, and was preparing to depart

for Florence, when he received intelligence which caused him the most lively grief. He had been already informed that his friend Socrates was travelling in Italy, but had not been able to discover in what part of it, when he was abruptly informed, and that from undoubted authority, that this unfortunate man had been assassinated by banditti some months before. Boccaccio took advantage of this event, and endeavoured to persuade Petrarch that it was to this fatal circumstance that his presentiments and melancholy dream were to be ascribed. This idea served, at least, to calm the disquietude of Petrarch, as to the existence and the health of Laura ; but the tragical death of his friend caused him such poignant grief, that he immediately fell sick ; he had a violent attack of fever, which retarded, for some days, his journey to Florence. At length, when he was

sufficiently recovered to mount his horse, he once more set out, accompanied by Boccacio.

As the public roads were more perilous than ever, in consequence of the numerous troops detached from different parts, and the great number of deserters who had become robbers, Petrarch and his companion preferred the cross roads, being only accompanied by an escort of five men. One evening, on reaching the borders of a lake, they discovered that they had lost their road: they endeavoured to retrace their steps, and again they missed the way. It was now night, and their embarrassment became extreme: they went on, without track, from one side of the forest to the other, in the hope of discovering some habitation; but they sought in vain. Surrounded by rocks and precipices, they found themselves in a solitude the most appalling. They at length paused, determined to

wait until the dawn of day should enable them to extricate themselves from this desert. Petrarch and Boccaccio alighted, and seated themselves on a rock ; their attendants stationed themselves at some distance, on a little mound of earth, planted with fir trees, to the trunks of which they fastened their horses. All that might have disturbed and harassed common travellers, was but a subject of inspiration for two poets, full of enthusiasm and of genius: the night, the danger, these wilds, at once awful and picturesque, which appeared to be the last refuge of misanthropy or despair, all these silent horrors were about to be celebrated in magnificent verse, when Petrarch heard, all at once, the mournful sound of a bell. The two friends immediately conjectured that they were in the neighbourhood of a church or a monastery, and decided on directing their steps towards it; guided by the funereal

knell. After having proceeded a little way they discovered, by the light of the moon, a lofty building: it was a Carthusian convent. They approached the door; they knocked repeatedly:—a mournful silence reigned throughout the building; the bell was no longer heard. They waited a considerable time, no human being appeared; they knocked again with increased force. After a few minutes had elapsed, they heard the barking of a dog, and at the same moment a window was opened, on the first floor, and near the entrance. By the faint beams of the moon they saw, standing upon a balcony, a figure—tall, pale, and emaciated; resembling more a spectre than a human form; and who, in a voice of lamentation, pronounced these words: “Here hospitality must banish the traveller: flee this mournful place, devoted to death!—this habitation, where pesti-

"I come to  
 you as a brother!"

"Brother!" exclaimed Pe-  
 ronne. "What does that mean?" The tones

of his voice—Oh Gerard  
 —at this cry of

the pious  
 heart, he recognized

—he stretched out his arms to  
 embrace them, and they mingled their

—Gerard asked of his  
 —and Ge-

—his heroic his-  
 —in which were

—the country. He  
 —the living sud-

—the women of the  
 —the origin of the

—he never proposed  
 —the thirty-

—the mer-  
 —the for the

—Gerard, the  
 —Gerard

remained alone ; devoted himself entirely to the recovery of his brethren—being, at the same time, their nurse, their physician, their confessor, and their sole friend upon earth ! They all died, as well as the persons hired to attend them. Gerard, in sad succession, committed their bodies to the ground ; and he had now come to sing the *requiem* for the last victim of this terrible malady ! This recital excited alike the admiration and the tenderness of Petrarch. “ Oh ! my virtuous brother,” he exclaimed, “ when we shall together appear at the foot of the Supreme Tribunal, how will thy glory then efface mine ! How far, on earth, dost thou now surpass me ! To thee I will devote myself, hero of saintly humanity, of the heart’s best charities ; thou who hast braved death to watch over, to comfort, and console those to whom thou wast but a stranger—is it not just that thy own brethren should



thus comfort thee." "I have but done that which was my duty," replied Gerard; "and I cannot accept thy generous offer. I have so far escaped that deadly evil, under which so many around me have perished; but I may, at this moment, perhaps be carrying the seeds of infection in my bosom: these I may communicate to thee, and I entreat thee to flee these walls."

"No," replied Petrarch, "I will not leave thee: I shall separate myself from my escort; and my friend will accompany them; I shall but retain my own horse, and he shall convey thee whithersoever thou wishest to go." At these words Boccacio insisted on being the companion of the two brothers. Gerard imposed silence upon them; and after having expressed the most lively gratitude, persisted in his refusal. "Well, then," said Petrarch, "since thou wilt not be prevailed on to quit these walls, now twice consecrated by thy god-like

labours, open to me the grate which separates me from thee, and I will enclose myself within its door, until contagion shall no longer be feared. Here then I will share, with thee, the danger."

"No," interrupted Gerard, "tomorrow I will depart: a poor monk, alone and on foot, can have nothing to fear. With all the private roads, in this neighbourhood, I am already acquainted. Depart—I will point out to you the path which you must follow—relieve me at once from the dreadful disquietude of seeing you linger in a place where you cannot remain without the danger of pestilence and death." Petrarch no longer remonstrated; he saw that his brother was inflexible. He threw himself upon his knees to ask his parting blessing. His friend, seized with the same enthusiasm, knelt also. Gerard, from his saintly heart, poured upon their heads

the holy unction of his blessing. He promised his brother to let him have tidings of him before his departure from Florence, and he gave him all the directions necessary to enable him to reach a village, which was not more than the distance of a league from the convent: he refused the money which Petrarch offered him ; but after their separation Petrarch called to him, in a loud voice, that he should leave his purse at the gate of the monastery ; which he did.

The friends then mounted their horses, and following exactly the route which Gerard had pointed out to them, they arrived at a town, where they slept. The following day, they heard of nothing but the sublime conduct of Gerard. They were informed, that since the flight of the prior, the convent had been many times assailed by robbers ; but that Gerard had always driven them away, by haranguing them

from the height of a tower, and assuring them that the plague was raging in the place which they designed to pillage. At length; the travellers heard that the superior of the convent, who had abandoned his poor brethren, in their utmost need, had been attacked by the plague, and had died on the road, destitute of all assistance. "Heaven," said Petrarch, "has thus punished the cowardice of this man; who, though the commander of this house, gave an example of desertion in its hour of peril. I hope that the same providential hand will watch over my brother; and if it do not miraculously preserve him from the contagion, will bestow upon him quickly the reward of so glorious a martyrdom.

During the remainder of the journey, Gerard was the only subject of conversation between the two friends. "Ah!" exclaimed Petrarch, "compared with conduct like his, how frivolous do all

the homage, all the honours, which poets receive, appear! He has not been crowned : but what is the triumph of talent, what the enjoyments of vanity ; how do these sink when weighed in the balance of a conscience like his ? The finest poems can never, in any nation, be perfectly appreciated but by a single class ; all fiction may be distorted or unnatural ; but his heroic devotion appeals to the hearts of all nations, in a language that every heart can feel, and every mind understand. In whatever terms actions like his may be related, they will produce the same effect. Oh ! if we could more deeply reflect upon the beautiful influence of virtue, would it be possible for us to resist her power ?” His friend applauded this reflection, for his soul was formed to feel its truth. The rest of their journey afforded no remarkable event : they arrived safely at Florence. Petrarch, in his impatience to receive

news of his brother, counted with great anxiety the passing hours.

At the expiration of about six weeks he was informed that a stranger, sent by Gerard, wished to have a communication with him. This messenger was immediately introduced: he brought, from Gerard, a letter; informing his brother that, having performed his quarantine in perfect health, he was now out of the reach of all danger. Petrarch received this news with great delight. The messenger on taking leave of him, thanked him for the benefits which he had rendered to his numerous and afflicted family. On Petrarch's demanding an explanation of this, he informed him that the purse which had been thrown at the gate of the convent, Gerard had presented to him in his name; that he was a poor peasant, in the environs of Montrieu. Petrarch assured him that he owed that sum to the generosity of Gerard solely.

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[illegible][illegible]

the *king of the poets of his age*. His friend added, that Laura, pressing the crown to her heart, had passionately exclaimed, *it shall never quit me, not even in the tomb*. At these words, which sounded but too prophetic to the ear of Petrarch, he started; he recalled the figure which he had seen in his dream—that veiled figure; tearing a withered crown. This remembrance afflicted him; however, he reflected, that even admitting this dream to be prophetic in all its particulars, the expressions of Laura were not calculated to excite encreased alarm; since they had merely declared that she would preserve that crown, and give orders to have it deposited in her tomb, without announcing that her death must be premature.

Relieved from these painful anxieties, Petrarch tasted the high gratification of revisiting his country, and of receiving the most touching proofs



of attachment and admiration. Invited to all the other cities of Italy, his desire of returning to Vacluse would not permit him to accept these honourable marks of regard.—Venice, where he had formerly so many enemies, manifested the same anxiety: he received a letter from the Doge, Andrew Dandolo, who pressed him to yield to his entreaties, and those of the Venetians. Petrarch addressed to the Doge, on this occasion, his celebrated reply; he conjured him, in the name of his country and humanity, to terminate the war; representing how glorious it would be to him to offer peace to his enemies, the Genoese, at the moment when he had just gained over them so decisive a victory, and thus give them an example of sublime moderation: he added, that victories truly illustrious and worthy of universal admiration, are those which are crowned by the re-establishment of public tran-

quillity. This letter of Petrarch is a masterly piece of composition, for the loftiness of the sentiments, and the eloquence, and strength of its political reasoning. The Doge had understanding enough to admire it, but not sufficient elevation of soul to follow this noble counsel ; and the consequences proved that, on this occasion, as in a thousand other circumstances, the most generous course is always the best.

After four months residence at Florence, Petrarch, having arranged all his affairs, and received every mark of homage, thought of nothing but returning to Vaucluse. Reinstated in his fortune, and loaded with honours, what happiness could be compared with his ! Full of delicious hopes, which he regarded as certainties ; he was happy in the remembrance of the past, and in the future he saw only supreme felicity. His life, his labours, his passion, his constancy, were alike crowned by pub-

lic admiration, fortune, and love ! The lustre of his reputation and of his genius rendered his union with Laura an event more memorable than the nuptials of a prince or a monarch. He was about to fix upon Vacluse the attention and the prayers of every feeling heart, of every enlightened mind, of every friend of the arts. Europe itself was about to celebrate his happiness. He bade a tender adieu to his friend Boccacio, and set out for that beloved spot, which he desired to behold with an impatience so ardent.— He had previously traced a plan of his route, which would expedite his journey ; but it was necessary to avoid the inconvenience of passing through the cities which were most particularly the seat of war.

A young poet, and one of the most enthusiastic of his admirers, Bambasia of Ferrara, wished to accompany him as far as Vacluse. This journey was

to Petrarch a new triumph: every place which received him bestowed upon him testimonies of the most lively admiration. In the course of his travels he was obliged to embark upon the Po: that river, as well as the land, was the theatre of war; all the vessels were armed, and their different colours announced to what cause they espoused. —Petrarch, belonging to no power, assumed green—the favorite colour of Laura; and, by the advice of Bambasia, he inscribed, in large letters, the name of Petrarch. It was not without emotion that he sailed upon that stream, so celebrated in mythology, and which recalled so many poetic ideas. Whilst his bark skimmed along the enchanting banks of that fine river, he recited the verses of Ovid upon the fall of the rash Phaeton. He fancied that he beheld his unhappy metamorphosed sisters, on perceiving, upon one of the shores, ancient poplars, whose flexible and trembling branches, half stripped

by age of their dark foliage, rose mournfully waving towards that heaven which they seemed yet to implore. As the bark of Petrarch advanced, he observed a great number of other vessels which had been attacked, and were defending themselves with desperate resolution. From afar was perceived the little vessel which carried Petrarch: they examined his colours to discover of what party he was. As soon as they read the name inscribed upon his banner—that celebrated name—they repeated it with transport, and the combat immediately ceased. They unanimously agreed to bestow some distinguished marks of homage on that great genius, whom all Italy honoured: it was decided, by universal acclamation, that a truce should be concluded during the whole time of his voyage. The reconciled enemies approached the bark of Petrarch; surrounded him, and offered themselves as his escort. Petrarch, as a mark of his gratitude,

paid the tribute of his voice, and of his enchanting lute. Upon the shore were seen the shepherds, bringing offerings of flowers and fruits, which were presented to the Poet of Peace; who suspending, by his presence, all dissensions restored to them, for a few short hours at least, the smiling images of concord and of happiness. Petrarch had the high satisfaction of hearing all these villagers, who assembled in crowds, sing upon the shore his sonnets, now universally known throughout the country. "O! mortal, favoured of heaven," exclaimed Bambasia, "upon thee are bestowed, in the flower of thy youth, those honours which have only blown for others like the night shade, to decorate their tombs. Can posterity render to thy memory justice more perfect, or a more affecting tribute of admiration?"

Petrarch, upon landing, could not repress his tears, whilst he reflected that

the hostilities which his presence had suspended, would too soon be renewed ! He addressed, on the shore, that multitude which had followed him ; he exhorted them to peace, and to forget the evils, and the violence, caused by the spirit of party. They replied to him by renewed applauses, but they resumed their arms. The two travellers pursued their journey ; they passed the night within a short distance from Avignon, which they were desirous of reaching in the morning.—Bambasia, at the dawn of day, perceiving, at a distance, the spires of the city, congratulated Petrarch upon the joy, which was prepared for him, in finding Laura disposed to receive his vows.—Petrarch, who had carefully preserved the second crown of laurel, which the senate had sent him, after he had suspended the first at the altar of St. Peter, drew from his casket that glorious crown, and wrapped it within the folds

of his mantle, in order to lay it at the feet of Laura. "This day," exclaimed he, "I shall, indeed, enjoy my triumph! What is that glory in which none participates? but how beautiful is it when it elevates the object we love. O, my friend," continued he, "you will behold me offer to Laura a tribute worthy of her. After so long an absence, and so many griefs, in a few moments I shall once more see her, and receive her vows for ever! Her beauteous eyes will beam on me with satisfaction! they will tell me all that she feels, with surprise, and with joy! What language could express such sentiments, since imagination alone can represent the delights of this first interview? I have then ennobled that name, which, in her affection, she once preferred to any other; and with what pride shall I behold her assume it? O! what will be my joy, when I shall conduct her in triumph to Vau-



close ; when we shall again read together all the mournful inscriptions that hopeless love once traced upon its trees, and upon its rocks ; when we shall again wander upon that stream, in which I saw her image reflected, that day on which her trembling hands covered this lute with laurels, which fame has still preserved. Great God ! is it possible to enjoy such happiness upon earth ! No, no ; since I must quit it, since I must die, since another and a better life awaits us, such a destiny can never be the portion of a being who is but mortal." This reflection, for a moment, obscured the bright vision which had lighted up the countenance of Petrarch ; he was at the gates of Avignon, and entered that city, but painful emotions mingled with his joy ; he was deeply moved upon finding himself in the street, in which was situated the church of St. Clara. It was there that he had, for

the first time, seen Laura ; and, in accordance with the pious custom of the time we are describing, it was usual for the traveller, returning home after a long absence, to offer prayers in a consecrated place, upon approaching his residence. In drawing near to St. Clara's, he observed, with a feeling of melancholy, that the portal was hung with black. He recollected, formerly, that in one of the happiest days of his life, he had seen the same temple covered with those gloomy decorations for the passion week. He entered the church, followed by Bambasia. The emblems of mourning, which surrounded him on every side, the solemn chaunt of funereal pomp, diffused through his soul an inexpressible sentiment of sorrow, and undefined disquietude. On advancing a few paces, he saw in the chancel a bier, surrounded by lighted tapers ; he approached ; scarcely durst he cast

his eyes upon the inanimate figure stretched in the coffin, and the countenance of which, according to the custom of the country, was uncovered ; he drew near to the spot trembling, under the dreadful thought that he might there recognize *a friend* !

Vainly did he try to combat this idea, at once so afflicting and so terrible, and which at once seized upon his bodily and mental faculties, and in a moment seemed to paralyze him.—Trembling, bewildered, horror-struck ! his wild eye was at length fixed upon that figure. It was a female form ! and on her head was placed a crown of *withered myrtle*. Unhappy Petrarch ! his hair stood erect ; his blood was frozen in his veins—he recognized Laura ! . . . . . He shed not a tear ; he stedfastly gazed upon this mournful object ! Those eyes, the brightness of which he had so often praised, and whose mild power he had so

deeply felt, were closed, and their last beamings had not shone on him. The soft enchantment of that countenance, so perfect, was lost in the shades of death. For some moments he remained immoveable ; then, all at once, snatching from his mantle his laurel crown, he threw it into the coffin, wildly exclaiming, " Vain phantom of human glory, descend into her tomb, and perish with her ! " At these words, fainting and exhausted, he sunk into the arms of his friend ; they immediately bore him from the church, and Bâmbasia conducted him to a neighbouring house, where he was received, and attended in the most affectionate manner. It was not very long before he was restored to his recollection ; but he awoke only to the agonies of a burning fever, which occasioned his friend the most lively anxiety and grief. His state was more alarming, because he neither wept nor complain-

ed, but continued to preserve a mournful and gloomy silence. A physician was sent for; and, for more than a week, his life was despaired of. At length, Bambasia learning that Isoarda was at Avignon, determined to go in quest of her; he found her in the deepest affliction, for the death of her friend; she had always loved Petrarch, and she immediately hastened to him. The moment he saw her, he uttered a piercing shriek, and burst into tears. The hopes of his physician then began to revive, and in a short time, he was pronounced so far out of danger, as to be removed to Vaucluse; whither Bambasia accompanied him, having decided to pass with him there two or three months. His unfortunate friend cut off, in a moment, from hopes that appeared so well founded, seemed only to have contemplated the prospect of a felicity so pure, that he might more deeply feel the bitterness of a

loss, for which the whole world could offer no compensation. Not a murmur escaped his lips ; but his heart-appalling silence, his mournfully patient looks sufficiently shewed, that, far from being reconciled to life, he was transfixed with despair. On entering his chamber at Vacluse, he seated himself in an arm-chair, where he remained immoveable, his eyes cast down, without uttering a single word, for several hours. At length, Bambasia, who hitherto had not dared to speak to him, hazarded a few words, in the hope of rousing him once more. Petrarch, without looking at him, answered him, with a bitter and paralyzing smile : " Would you undertake, then, to console me ? " Bambasia, shocked and embarrassed, did not venture to reply. A moment after, a servant entered, bringing the lute of Petrarch, which he hung against the wall, where it was usually suspended. Pe-

trarch shuddered, and turning to Bambasia, "For pity's sake," said he, "throw a veil over that fatal instrument, the sight of which will inevitably break my heart. To-morrow ; yes, to-morrow, I will myself cover it with a mournful veil, which shall never be taken from it till my death. I ought to preserve it ; it was crowned by her, and bathed with her tears ; but its strings are now all broken, and henceforth it shall be silent as the grave."

Bambasia obeyed ; but placing over the lute a white covering : "No," said he, "this lute which has charmed the whole universe, shall not be silenced by a sentence so cruel : she who would not have had it touched too rudely, would, still less, have suffered it to become dumb. Let it, at least, honour by sublime strains the memory of the virtuous object of a grief so tender and so just." At these words, Petrarch sighed ; some tears escaped

from his eyes : Bambasia seizing this moment of feeling, once more melting to the voice of sympathy, approached him ; he took one of his hands, and clasped it within his own. “ Bambasia,” said Petrarch, in a solemn tone, “ the chords of this lute must be to me for ever sacred, once it was theirs to melt the bosom of an angel ; and I will not that they should be profaned. To thee, I bequeath it ; but, on condition that it shall never be employed but to celebrate the praises of the Eternal.” “ It is to thee,” replied Bambasia, “ that it belongs, to sing them worthily, and religion shall once more rekindle thy genius.” Petrarch replied not—he clasped the hand of his friend, and sunk once more into thought and sadness. Very soon after, however, he requested him to go into his library to search for the superb manuscripts of Virgil, which the painter, Simon



of Sienna, had ornamented with beautiful figures.

Bambasia brought it, and Petrarch wrote upon this precious volume a long note, expressive of his heartfelt grief. Then placing the book upon the table : " I wish," said he, " that it should remain here, that I may read every day what I have now written."

" Great God !" exclaimed Bambasia, " what is then your design ? What project do you form ?" " None ; life itself is at an end !" " In renouncing happiness, do you then renounce religion ?" " No, I wait the stroke of death, but I will never inflict it." Bambasia wished to have continued this conversation ; but Petrarch would reply no more. He remained in this state of torpor several days, without even quitting his chamber, and commanded his domestics to leave him in the most profound silence. Bambasia, perceiving that he had a return of fever, sent for a physician,

who ordered him to take the air ; and Petrarch suffered himself to be conducted to his gardens, which were situated on an eminence, which he called his Parnassus. There he seated himself, with his friend, upon a bank of moss. “ The air,” said he, “ is purer here, and I feel that I can breathe more freely ; but the inspirations which I once found here, will never awake me more !” On pronouncing these words, his eyes were fixed upon a pillar of white marble, which he had never yet seen in this place. On each side of the pillar was planted a young cypress. Petrarch contemplating, with surprise, this little monument, conceived it a work of his friend ; but on his assuring him that he had never before visited this hill, Petrarch arose, approached the pillar, and read the following inscription :

“ I have passed the mountains that  
“ separated us ; I have seen him

“ crowned—I have witnessed his glory.  
“ This hand has been honoured by  
“ the touch of his : I have visited  
“ Vaocluse: I have wept on the brink  
“ of the fountain: I have experienced,  
“ I have beheld the visionary scenes of  
“ earth: I shall now bury myself in  
“ that peaceful asylum where we live  
“ only for eternity !”

Petrarch, for the first time, since the death of Laura, experienced an emotion foreign to his grief. “This then,” said he, “ explains to me that mystery which has caused me so much disquietude. This then, was the mourning figure which I beheld at Rome, and afterwards at that entertainment, under the allegorical figure of immortality. Unhappy Orphania! how I pity you! for you know how to love ; but you know not the greatest of evils—that of mourning the death of a being too fondly loved.” Petrarch, during the whole day, was diverted from his own misfortunes

by the image of the gentle and tender Orphania, and appeared to take a lively interest in the fate of this unfortunate young lady. The old servant of the house was questioned. She said, that some time before the return of Petrarch, a veiled young lady had caused that marble pillar to be erected in the garden on the hill, and had entreated of her, with great earnestness, to conceal this little monument from the eye of the curious, by leaving upon it the straw mat, with which she had covered it till the return of Petrarch; and until the moment, when he should revisit this garden, to be silent upon the subject. This servant added, that the young lady had paid a visit to the rector of Vacluse, and placed in his hands a considerable donation for the surrounding poor. This recital touched Petrarch. He spoke of Orphania with deep interest, but the following day the remembrance of Laura effaced

from his heart every other idea. What most deeply afflicted his friend, was the state of absolute inaction into which he had fallen. The fire of his imagination seemed extinguished ; he had neither the power nor the will to murmur or to mourn. With his eyes fixed upon the earth, he still saw Laura, pale and lifeless, stretched in her coffin ; his blood seemed no longer to circulate in his veins, and the continued contemplation only prolonged this dreadful sensation, and left in his mind but this one idea, "*She is no more.*"

In this state he long remained, when his dearest friend Lelius, informed of his calamity, arrived at Vaucluse. Petrarch, having renounced all consolation, received him with a cold and mournful silence. Lelius expecting to have found him in all the violence of grief, was alarmed at his composure. He passed two days in attending to his

peculiar state of suffering, without attempting to draw him from that species of lethargy into which he was plunged. At length, entering one morning into his chamber, he seated himself beside him, and reproached him with his coldness and his silence. Petrarch sighed deeply. "Alas," said he, "what can I speak of! I see her pale and livid, crowned with those funereal myrtles ready, like herself, to crumble into dust. This vision quits me not; it is ever before my eyes. Pursued by such an image, does there exist for me one solitary resource?" "Yes, without doubt," exclaimed Lelius, "'Tis thine to render thy grief as celebrated as thy love—'Tis thine to immortalize the name of her, the interesting object of thy grief. 'Tis in once more awakening thy genius: it is in displaying all the courage of a mighty soul, that thou mayest at once render illustrious thy feeling and thy constancy. Think

then that thy talents belong not to love alone. Thou who hast sung so well the benefits of the Creator, the bounties of nature, heroism and liberty, abjure not *true glory*. Hast thou not described the price of true virtue? Belie not then, by cowardly despair, that noble maxim. No, no ! I feel that my friend will once more be restored to me." At these words a glow of animation again overspread the faded countenance of Petrarch. He embraced Lelius ; who immediately rose, tore away the crape that covered his lute and presenting it to him, " Resume thy noble occupations," said he : " I condemn not thy grief, I lament not its power ; but the torpor in which I see thee, is unworthy of a character so great as thine." " Take then from me the sight of that coffin." " Come to the grotto of Vaocluse," replied Lelius. " What do you say ? I have vowed never to enter it more."

“ You will find there agonizing remembrances, but they will rouse you from this dreadful stupor.” “ Come—I shall die there.” “ No, that fountain, that poetic stream will reanimate thy imagination, and thou wilt once more find upon its borders all the inspirations of genius.” Lelius, still holding the lute, took the arm of Petrarch, who suffered himself to be conducted to the grotto. The vehemence of his friend produced, upon Petrarch, a salutary effect. He was ashamed of his weakness, and, on entering the grotto, he no longer repulsed the lute which Lelius presented to him. “ Ah !” said he, “ never more will it be thine to work a miracle. It matters not ; thy ascendancy over me will at least prove, that to friendship, my heart is not for ever closed.”

As he said these words, he advanced, with tottering step, to the borders of the fountain ; then, seized with a mo-



mentary transport, he drew from his lute sounds that at once surprised his friend, and touched his heart. Petrarch, at the same time, cast his eyes upon that limpid stream. Immediately his paleness was dissipated ; and, with a tone full of enthusiasm, he exclaimed, " I yet see her ; still does that beloved stream reflect her image ; she is restored to me ; I behold her in all the lustre of her exquisite beauty ; she hears me !" At these words, in a voice sonorous though broken, he sung the first verses that he had dedicated to her. Then, exhausted by the violence of his emotions, he suffered himself to be led from the grotto.

From this day, his grief assumed a new character ; it was a consolation to speak of it : his tears again flowed, and he listened to the voice of reason, and of friendship. He resumed his studies, and all his poetic vigour ; but, in again becoming the first poet

of his age and of his nation, he remained the most faithful of lovers; consecrating himself to the most profound solitude, disdaining ambition, and refusing the most brilliant offers of the greatest Princes of Europe, he shut himself up at Vacluse: he wept there; and during the seven years which he dwelt there, without quitting it for a single hour, he ceased not to mourn the lost object of his regret. Time alone could not have consoled him; but his ardent imagination, by happy fictions, served at once to deceive, to soften, and to prolong his grief. In former times, when separated from Laura, he had not vainly called to his assistance that fantastic power, which, by turns, his enemy and his consoler, created for him, at her pleasure, mournful spectres of grief, or the most delightful illusions. That queen of an ideal empire, but the arbitrary sovereign of ardent minds and

feeling hearts, attended once more at the mournful call of the despairing poet. She calmed his sorrows, by restoring to him the power of painting them. The recital of his woes proved not fruitless. In expressing, in sublime strains, the pangs which he experienced, his mournful reveries furnished subjects worthy of descending to posterity; and, from this source sprung his finest compositions. His imagination did yet more. In the dreadful absence of joys, departed never to return, she broke for him the eternal sceptre of death; and out of the cold ashes of the tomb, she called a new creation of love, of hope, of heaven. He found Laura in every place where he had once met her; his house, and his gardens, shared not in this enchantment, for there she had never entered; but at the evening hour, in the woods of Vaucluse, in his meadows, and, above all, in the grotto, she spoke to him; he conversed with her,

and never had love a language so exalted, or expressed in sentiments so pure, so virtuous. Most frequently she appeared to him with those traits which his heart had felt, and his pen had celebrated ; but sometimes, when seated, by the clear light of the moon, under one of the rocks of the valley, his eyes raised to heaven, he saw her in the clouds, surrounded by that glory which can never perish ; and he heard her divine voice utter these words—“ *Thou shall join me here !*”

FINIS.







